SNUG CORNER SERIES

THE CUCKOO CLOCK.

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TO

MARY JOSEPHINE,

AND TO THE DEAR MEMORY OF HER BROTHER,

THOMAS GRINDAL,

BOTH FRIENDLY LITTLE CRITICS OF MY CHILDRENS' STORIES.

Edinburgh, 1877.

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THE CUCKOO CLOCK,

CHAPTER I.

THE OLD HOUSE.

"Somewhat back from the village street
Stands the old-fashioned country-seat."

Once upon a time, in an old town, in an old street, there stood a very old house. Such a house as you could hardly find nowadays, however you searched, for it belonged to a gone-by time—a time now quite passed away.

It stood in a street, but yet it was not like a town house, for though the front opened right on to the pavement, the back windows looked out upon a beautiful, quaintly terraced garden, with old trees growing so thick and close together that in summer it was like living on the edge of a forest to be near them; and even in winter the web of their interlaced branches hid all clear view behind.

There was a colony of rooks in this old garden. Year after year they held their parliaments, and cawed and chattered and fussed; year after year they built their nests and hatched their eggs, year

after year, I suppose, the old ones gradually died off and the young ones took their places; though, but for knowing this must be so, no one would have suspected it, for to all appearance the rooks were always the same.

Time, indeed, seemed to stand still in and all about the old house, as if it and the old people who inhabited it got so old that they could not get any older, and had outlived the possibility of change.

But one day at last there did come a change. Late in the dusk of an autumn afternoon a carriage drove up to the door of the old house, came rattling over the stones with a sudden noisy clatter that sounded quite impertinent, startling the rooks just as they were composing themselves to rest, and setting them all wondering what could be the matter.

A little girl was the matter! A little girl in a gray merino frock and gray beaver bonnet, gray tippet, and gray gloves—all except her round rosy face, and bright brown hair. Her name even was rather gray, for it was Griselda.

A gentleman lifted her out of the carriage and dissappeared with her into the house; and later that same evening the gentleman came out of the house and got into the carriage, which had come back for him again, and drove away. That was

all that the rooks saw of the change that had come to the old house. Shall we go inside to see more?

Up to the shallow, wide, old-fashioned staircase, past the wainscoted walls, dark and shining like a mirror, down a long, narrow passage with many doors, which but for their gleaming brass handles one would not have known were there, the oldest of the three old servants led little Griselda, so tired and sleepy that her supper had been left almost untasted, to the room prepared for her. It was a queer room, for everything in the room was queer; but in the dancing light of the fire burning brightly in the tiled grate, it looked cheerful enough.

"I am glad there's a fire," said the child. "Will it keep alight till the morning, do you think?"

The old servant shook her head.

"'Twould not be safe to leave it so that it would burn till morning," she said. "When you are in bed and asleep, little missie, you won't want the fire. Bed's the warmest place."

"It isn't for that I want it," said Griselda, "it's for the light I like it. This house all looks so dark to me, and yet there seem to be lights hidden in the walls, too, they shine so."

The old servant smiled.

"It will all seem strange to you, no doubt," she said; "but you'll get used to it missie. 'Tis a good

old house, and those that know best love it well."

"Whom do you mean?" said Griselda. "Do you mean my great-aunts?"

"Ah, yes, and others besides," replied the old woman. "The rooks love it well, and others besides. Did you ever hear tell of the 'good people,' missie, over the sea where you come from?"

"Fairies, do you mean?" cried Griselda, her eyes sparkling. "Of course I've heard of them, but I never saw any. Did you ever?"

"I couldn't say answered the old woman. "My mind is not young like yours, missie, and there are times when strange memories come back to me as of sights and sounds in a dream. I am too old to see and hear as I once could. We are all old here, missie. 'Twas time something young came to the old house again."

"How strange and queer everything seems!" thought Griselda as she got in bed. "I don't feel as if I belonged to it a bit. And they are all so old; perhaps they won't like having a child among them."

The very same thought had occurred to the rooks! They could not decide as to the fors and againsts at all; so they settled to put it to the vote the next morning, and in the meantime they and Griselda all went to sleep.

I never heard if they slept well that night; after such unusual excitement it was hardly to be expected they would. But Griselda, being a little girl and not a rook, was so tired that two minutes after she had tucked herself up in bed she was quite sound asleep and did not wake for several hours.

"I wonder what it will all look like in the morning?" was her last waking thought. "If it was summer now, or spring, I shouldn't mind—there would be something nice to do then."

As sometimes happens, when she woke again, very early in the morning, long before it was light, her thoughts went straight on with the same subject.

"If it was summer now, or spring," she repeated to herself, just as if she had not been asleep at all —like the man who fell into a trance for a hundred years just as he was saying "it is bit—" and when he woke up again finished the sentence just as if nothing had happened—"terly cold." "If only it was spring," thought Griselda.

Just as she had got so far in her thoughts, she gave a great start. What was it she heard? Was this fairyland indeed that she had got to, where one only needs to wish, for it to be? She rubbed her eyes, but it was too dark to see; that was not very fairyland-like, but her ears she felt certain had

not deceived her: she was quite, quite sure that she had heard the cuckoo!

She listened with all her might, but she did not hear it again. Could it, after all, have been fancy? She grew sleepy at last, and was just dropping off, when—yes, there it was again, as clear and distinct as possible—"Cuckoo, cuckoo, cuckoo!" three, four, five times, then perfect silence as before.

"What a funny cuckoo!" said Griselda to herself. "I could almost fancy it was in the house. I wonder if my great-aunts have a tame cuckoo in a cage? I don't think I ever heard of such a thing, but, this is such a queer house; everything seems different in it—perhaps they have a tame cuckoo. I'll ask them in the morning. It's very nice to hear, whatever it is."

And with a pleasant feeling of companionship, a sense that she was not the only living creature awake in this dark world, Griselda lay listening contentedly enough, for the sweet, fresh notes of the cuckoo's friendly greeting. But before it sounded again through the silent house she was once more fast asleep. And this time she slept till daylight had found its way into all but the very darkest nooks and crannies of the ancient dwelling.

She dressed herself carefully, for she had been warned that her aunts loved neatness and preci-

sion; she fastened each button of her gray frock, and tied down her hair as smooth as such a brown tangle could be tied down; and, absorbed with these weighty cares, she forgot all about the cuckoo for the time. It was not till she was sitting at breakfast with her aunts that she remembered it, or rather was reminded of it by some little remark that was made about the friendly robins on the terrace walk outside.

"Oh, aunt!" she exclaimed, stopping short halfway the journey to her mouth of a spoonful of bread and milk," have you got a cuckoo in a cage!"

"A cuckoo in a cage!" repeated her elder aunt, Miss Grizzel; "what is the child talking about?"

"In a cage!" echoed Miss Tabitha, "a cuckoo in a cage!"

"There is a cuckoo somewhere in the house," said Griselda; "I heard it in the night. It couldn't have been out-of-doors could it? It would be too cold."

The aunts looked at each other with a little smile. "So like her grandmother," they whispered.

Then said Miss Grizzel:

"We have a cuckoo, my dear, though it isn't in a cage, and it isn't exactly the sort of cuckoo you are thinking of. It lives in a clock."

"In a clock," repeated Miss Tabitha, as if to confirm her sister's statement.

"In a clock!" exclaimed Griselda, opening her gray eyes very wide.

It sounded something like the three bears, all speaking after one another, only Griselda's voice was not like Tiny's; it was the loudest of the three.

"In a clock!" she exclaimed; "but it cant't be alive, then?"

"Why not?" said Miss Grizzel.

"I don't know," replied Griselda, looking puzzled.

"I knew a little girl once," pursued Miss Grizzel, "who was quite of opinion the cuckoo was alive, and nothing would have persuaded her it was not. Finish your breakfast, my dear, and then, if you like, you shall come with me and see the cuckoo for yourself."

"Thank you, Aunt Grizzel," said Griselda, going on with her bread-and-milk.

"Yes," said Miss Tabitha, "you shall see the cuckoo for yourself."

"Thank you, Aunt Tabitha," said Griselda. It was rather a bother to have always to say "Thank you" or "No, thank you" twice, but Griselda thought it was polite to do so, as Aunt Tabitha always repeated everything that Aunt Grizzel said.

It wouldn't have mattered so much if Aunt Tabitha had said it at once after Miss Grizzel; but as she generally made a little pause between it was sometimes rather awkward. But of course it was better to say "Thank you" or "No, thank you" twice over than to hurt Aunt Tabitha's feelings.

After breakfast Aunt Grizzel was as good as her word. She took Griselda through several of the rooms in the house, pointing out all the curiosities, and telling all the histories of the rooms and their contents; and Griselda liked to listen, only in every room they came to she wondered when they would get to the room where lived the cuckoo.

Aunt Tabitha did not come with them, for she was rather rheumatic. On the whole, Griselda was not sorry, it would have taken such a very long time, you see, to have had all the histories twice over; and possibly, if Griselda had got tired, she might have forgotten about the "Thank you's" or "No thank you's" twice over.

The old house looked quite as queer and quaint by daylight as it had seemed the evening before; almost more so, indeed, for the view from the windows added to the sweet, odd, old-fashionedness" of everything.

"We have beautiful roses in summer; observed Miss Grizzel, catching sight of the direction in which the child's eyes were wondering.

"I wish it was summer. I do love summer," said Griselda. But there is a very rosy scent in the rooms even now, Aunt Grizzel, though it is winter, or nearly winter."

Miss Grizzel looked pleased.

"My pot-pourri," she explained.

They were just then standing in what she called the "great saloon," a handsome old room furnished with gold-and-white chairs, that must once have been brilliant, and faded yellow damask hangings. A feeling of awe had crept over Griselda as they entered this ancient drawing-room. What grand parties there must have been in it long ago! But as for dancing in it now—dancing, or laughing, or chattering—such a thing was quite impossible to imagine!

Miss Grizzel crossed the room to where stood in one corner a marvelous Chinese cabinet, all black and gold and carving. It was made in the shape of a temple or a palace—Griselda was not sure which. Anyway, it was very delicious and wonderful. At the door stood, one on each side, two solemn mandarins; or, to speak more correctly, perhaps I should say mandarin and his wife, for the right-hand figure was evidently intended to be a lady.

Miss Grizzel gently touched their heads. Forth-

with, to Griselda's astonishment, they began solemnly to nod.

"Oh, how do you make them do that, Aunt Grizzel?" she exclaimed.

"Never you mind, my dear; it wouldn't do for you to try and make them nod. They wouldn't like it," replied Miss Grizzel mysteriously. "Respect to your elders, my dear, always remember that. The mandarins are many years older than you—older than I myself, in fact."

Griselda wondered, if this were so, how it was that Miss Grizzel took such liberties with them herself, but she said nothing.

"Here is my last summer's pot-pourri," continued Miss Grizzel, touching a great china jar on a little stand, close beside the cabinet. "You may smell it, my dear."

Nothing loath, Griselda buried her round little nose in the fragrant leaves.

"It's lovely," she said. May I smell it whenever I like, Aunt Grizzel?"

"We shall see," replied her aunt. "It isn't every little girl that we could trust to come into the great saloon alone."

"No," said Griselda meekly.

Miss Grizzel led the way to a door opposite to that by which they had entered. She opened it and

passed through, Griselda following, into a small anteroom.

"It is on the stroke of ten," said Miss Grizzel, consulting her watch. "now, my dear, you shall make acquaintance with our cuckoo."

The cuckoo "that lived in a clock!" Griselda gazed round her eagerly. Where was the clock? She could see nothing in the least like one, only up on the wall in one corner was what looked like a miniature house, of dark brown carved wood. It was not so very like a house, but it certainly had a roof—a roof with deep, projecting eaves; and looking closer—yes, it was a clock, after all, only the figures, which had once been gilt, had grown dim with age, like everything else, and the hands at a little distance were hardly to be distinguished from the face.

Miss Grizzel stood perfectly still, looking up at the clock; Griselda beside her in breathless expecttation. Presently there came a sort of distant rumbling. Something was going to happen. Suddenly two little doors above the clock face, which Griselda had not known were there, sprang open with a burst, and out flew a cuckoo, flapped his wings, and uttered his pretty cry, "Cuckoo! cuckoo! cuckoo!" Miss Grizzel counted aloud, "Seven, eight, nine, ten." "Yes, he never makes a mis-

take," she added triumphantly. "All these long years I have never known him wrong. There are no such clocks made nowadays, I can assure you, my dear."

"But is it a clock? Isn't he alive?" exclaimed Griselda. He looked at me and nodded his head before he flapped his wings and went into his house again—he did indeed, aunt," she said earnestly; just like saying, 'How do you do?' to me."

Again Miss Grizzel smiled, the same odd yet pleased smile that Griselda had seen on her face at breakfast. "Just what Sybilla used to say," she murmured. "Well, my dear," she added aloud, "it is quite right he should say, 'How do you do?' to you. It is the first time he has seen you, though many a year ago he knew your dear grandmother, and your father, too, when he was a little boy. You will find him a good friend, and one that can teach you many lessons."

"What, Aunt Grizzel?" inquired Griselda looking puzzled.

"Punctuality, for one thing, and faithful discharge of duty," replied Miss Grizzel.

"May I come to see the cuckoo—to watch for him coming out, sometimes?" asked Griselda, who felt as if she could spend all day looking up at the clock, watching for her little friend's appearance.

"You will see him several times a day," said her aunt; "for it is in this little room that I intend you to prepare your tasks. It is nice and quiet, and nothing to disturb you, and close to the room where your Aunt Tabitha and I usually sit."

So saying, Miss Grizzel opened a second door in the little anteroom; and, to Griselda's surprise, at the foot of a short flight of stairs, through another door, half open, she caught sight of her Aunt Tabitha, knitting quietly by the fire, in the room in which they had breakfasted.

"What a very funny house it is, Aunt Grizzel!" she said as she followed her aunt down the steps.

"Every room has so many doors, and you come back to where you were just when you think you are ever so far off. I shall never be able to find my way about."

"Oh, yes, you will, my dear, very soon," said her aunt encouragingly.

"She is very kind," thought Griselda; "but I wish she wouldn't call my lessons tasks. It makes them sound so dreadfully hard. But, anyway, I'm glad I'm to do them in the room where the dear cuckoo lives."

CHAPTER II.

IMPATIENT GRISELDA.

"... fairies but seldom appear;
If we do wrong we must expect
That it will cost us dear!"

It was all very well for a few days. Griselda found plenty to amuse herself with while the novelty lasted, enough to prevent her missing very badly the home she left "over the sea," and the troop of noisy, merry brothers who teased and petted her. Of course she missed them, but not "dreadfully." She was neither homesick nor "dull."

It was not quite such smooth sailing when lessons began. She did not dislike lessons; in fact, she had always thought she was rather fond of them. But the having to do them alone was not lively, and her teachers were very strict. The worst of all was the writing and arithmetic master, a funny little old man who wore knee-breeches and took snuff, and called her aunt "Madame," bowing

formally whenever he addressed her. He screwed Griselda up into such an unnatural attitude to write her copies that she really felt as if she would never come straight and loose again; and the arithmetic part of his instructions was even worse. Oh! what sums in addition he gave her! Griselda had never been partial to sums; and her rather easy-going governess at home had not, to tell the truth, been partial to them either. And Mr.—I can't remember the little old gentleman's name; suppose we call him Mr. Kneebreeches—Mr. Kneebreeches, when he found this out, conscientiously put her back to the very beginning.

It was dreadful, really. He came twice a week; and the days he didn't come were as bad as those he did, for he left her a whole row, I was going to say, but you couldn't call Mr. Kneebreeches' addition sums "rows," they were too fat and wide across to be spoken of!—whole slatefuls of these terrible mountains of figures to climb wearily to the top of. And not to climb once up merely. The terrible thing was Mr. Kneebreeches' favorite method of what he called "proving." I can't explain it—it is far beyond my poor powers—but it had something to do with cutting off the top line, after you had added it all up and had actually done the sum, you understand—cutting off the top

line and adding the long rows up over again without it, and then joining it on again somewhere else.

"I wouldn't mind so much," said poor Griselda one day, "if it was any good. But you see, Aunt Grizzel, it isn't. For I'm just as likely to do the proving wrong as the sum itself—more likely, for I'm always so tired when I get to the proving—and so all that's proved is that something's wrong, and I'm sure that isn't any good, except to make me cross."

"Hush!" said her aunt gravely. That is not the way for a little girl to speak. Improve these golden hours of youth, Griselda; they will never return."

"I hope not," muttered Griselda, "if it means doing sums."

Miss Grizzel fortunately was a little deaf; she did not hear this remark. Just then the cuckoo clock struck eleven.

"Good little cuckoo," said Miss Grizzel. "What an example he sets you. His life is spent in the faithful discharge of duty;" and so saying she left the room.

The cuckoo was still telling the hour—eleven took a good while. It seemed to Griselda that the bird repeated her aunts last words. "Faith—ful,

dis—charge of—your du—ty," he said, "faith—ful."

"You horrid little creature!" exclaimed Griselda in a passion; "what business have you to mock me?"

She had seized a book, the first that came to hand and flung it at the bird who was just beginning his eleventh cuckoo. He disappeared with a snap, disappeared without flapping his wings, or, as Griselda always fancied he did, giving her a friendly nod, and in an instant all was silent.

Griselda felt a little frightened. What had she done? She looked up at the clock. It seemed just the same as usual, the cuckoo's doors closely shut, no sign of any disturbance. Could it have been her fancy only that he had sprung back more hastily than he would have done but for her throwing the book at him? She began to hope so, and tried to go on with her lessons. But it was no use. Though she really gave her best attention to the long addition sums, and found that by so doing she managed them much better than before, she could not feel happy or at ease. Every few minutes she glanced up at the clock, as if she expected the cuckoo to come out, though she knew quite well that there was no chance of his doing so till twelve o'clock, as it was only the hours, not the half-hours and quarters that he told.

"I wish it was twelve o'clock," she said to herself anxiously more than once.

If only the clock had not been so very high up on the wall, she would have been tempted to climb up and open the doors, and peep in to satisfy herself as to the cuckoo's condition. But there was no possibility of this. The clock was far, very far above her reach, and there was no high piece of furniture standing near upon which she could have climbed to get to it. There was nothing to be done but to wait for twelve o'clock.

And, after all, she did not wait for twelve o'clock; for just about half-past eleven, Miss Grizzel's voice was heard calling to her to put on her hat and coat quickly, and come out to walk up and down the terrace with her.

"It is fine just now," said Miss Grizzel, "but there is a prospect of rain before long. You must leave your lessons for the present, and finish them in the afternoon."

"I have finished them," said Griselda meekly.

"All?" inquired her aunt.

"Yes, all," replied Griselda.

"Ah, well, then, this afternoon, if the rain holds off, we shall drive to Merrybrow Hall, and inquire for the health of your dear godmother, Lady Lavender," said Miss Grissel.

Poor Griselda! There were few things she disliked more than a drive with her aunts. They went in the old yellow chariot, with all the windows up; and of course Griselda had to sit with her back to the horses, which made her very uncomfortable when she had no air, and had to sit still for so long.

Merrybrow Hall was a large house, quite as old and much grander, but not nearly so wonderful as the home of Griselda's aunts. It was six miles off, and it took a very long time to drive there in the rumbling old chariot, for the old horses were fat and wheezy too. Lady Lavender was, of course, old too—very old indeed, and rather grumpy and very deaf. Miss Grizzel and Miss Tabitha had the greatest respect for her; she always called them "My dear," as if they were quite girls, and they listened to all that she said as if her words were of gold. For some mysterious reason she had been invited to be Griselda's godmother; but as she had never shown her any proof of affection beyond giving her a prayer-book, and hoping, whenever she saw her, that she was "a good little miss," Griselda did not feel any particular cause for gratitude to her.

The drive seemed longer and duller than ever this afternoon, but Griselda bore it meekly; and

when Lady Lavender, as usual, expressed her hopes about her, the little girl looked down modestly, feeling her cheeks grow scarlet. "I am not a good little girl at all," she felt inclined to call out. "I'm very bad and cruel. I believe I've killed the dear little cuckoo."

What would the three old ladies have thought if she had called it out? As it was, Lady Lavender patted her approvingly, said she loved to see young people modest and humble-minded, and gave her a slice of highly spiced, rather musty gingerbread, which Griselda couldn't bear.

All the way home Griselda felt in a fever of impatience to rush up to the anteroom and see if the cuckoo was all right again. It was late and dark when the chariot at last stopped at the door of the old house. Miss Grizzel got out slowly, and still more slowly Miss Tabitha followed her. Griselda was obliged to restrain herself and move demurely.

"It is past your supper-time, my dear," said Miss Grizzel. "Go up at once to your room, and Dorcas shall bring some supper to you. Late hours are bad for young people."

Griselda obediently wished her aunts good-night, and went quietly upstairs. But once out of sight, at the first landing, she changed her pace. She

turned to the left instead of to the right, which led to her own room, and flew rather than ran along the dimly lighted passage, at the end of which a door led into the great saloon. She opened the door. All was quite dark. It was impossible to fly or run across the great saloon! Even in daylight this would have been a difficult matter. Griselda felt her way as best she could, past the Chinese cabinet and the pot-pourri jar, till she got to the ante-room door. It was open, and now, knowing her way better, she hurried in. But what was the use? All was silent, save the tick-tick of the cuckoo clock in the corner. Oh, if only the cuckoo would come out and call the hour as usual, what a weight would be lifted off Griselda's heart!

She had no idea what o'clock it was. It might be close to the hour, or it might be just past it. She stood listening for a few minutes; then hearing Miss Grizzel's voice in the distance, she felt that she dared not stay any longer, and turned to feel her way out of the room again. Just as she got to the door, it seemed to her that something softly brushed her cheek, and a very, very faint "cuckoo" sounded as it were in the air close to her.

Startled, but not frightened, Griselda stood perfectly still.

"Cuckoo," she said softly. But there was no answer.

Again the tones of Miss Grizzel's voice coming upstairs reached her ear.

"I must go," said Griselda; and finding her way across the saloon without, by great good luck, tumbling against any of the many breakable treasures with which it was filled, she flew down the long passage again, reaching her own room just before Dorcas appeared with her supper.

Griselda slept badly that night. She was constantly dreaming of the cuckoo, fancying she heard his voice, and then waking with a start to find it was only fancy. She looked pale and heavy-eyed when she came down to breakfast the next morning; and her Aunt Tabitha, who was alone in the room when she entered, began immediately asking what was the matter.

"I am sure you are going to be ill, child," she said nervously. "Sister Grizzel must give you some medicine. I wonder what would be the best. Tansy tea is an excellent thing when one has taken cold, or—"

But the rest of Miss Tabitha's sentence was never heard; for at this moment Miss Grizzell came hurriedly into the room—her cap awry, her shawl disarranged, her face very pale. I hardly think any one had ever seen her so discomposed before.

"Sister Tabitha!" she exclaimed, "what can be

going to happen? The cuckoo clock has stopped."

"The cuckoo clock has stopped!" repeated Miss Tabitha, holding up her hands; "impossible!"

"But it has, or rather I should say—dear me, I am so upset I cannot explain myself—the cuckoo has stopped. The clock is going on; but the cuckoo has not told the hours, and Dorcas is of the opinion that he left off doing so yesterday. What can be going to happen? What shall we do?"

"What can we do?" said Miss Tabitha. "Should we send for the watchmaker?"

Miss Grizzel shook her head.

"'Twould be worse than useless. Were we to search the world over, we could find no one to put it right. Fifty years and more, Tabitha, fifty years and more, it has never missed an hour! We are getting old, Tabitha, our day is nearly over; perhaps 'tis to remind us of this."

Miss Tabitha did not reply. She was weeping silently. The old ladies seemed to have forgotten the presence of their niece, but Griselda could not bear to see their distress. She finished her breakfast as quickly as she could, and left the room.

On her way upstairs she met Dorcas.

"Have you heard what has happened, little missie?" said the old servant.

"Yes," replied Griselda.

"My ladies are in great trouble," continued Dorcas, who seemed inclined to be more communicative than usual, "and no wonder. For fifty years that clock has never gone wrong."

"Can't it be put right?" asked the child.

Dorcas shook her head.

"No good would come of interfering," she said. "What must be, must be. The luck of the house hangs on that clock. Its maker spent a good part of his life over it; and his last words were that it would bring good luck to the house that owned it, but that trouble would follow its silence. It's my belief," she added solemnly, "that it's a fairy clock, neither more nor less; for good luck it has brought, there's no denying. There are no cows like ours, missie—their milk is a proverb hereabout; there are no hens like ours for laying all the year round; there are no roses like ours. And there's always a friendly feeling in this house, and always has been. 'Tis not a house for wrangling and jangling, and sharp words. The 'good people' can't stand that. Nothing drives them away like ill-temper or anger."

Griselda's conscience gave her a sharp prick. Could it be her doing that trouble was coming upon the old house? What a punishment for a moment's fit of ill-temper!

"I wish you wouldn't talk that way, Dorcas," she said; "it makes me so unhappy."

"What a feeling heart the child has!" said the old servant as she went on her way downstairs. "It's true—she is very like Miss Sybilla."

That day was a very weary and sad one for Griselda. She was oppressed by a feeling she did not understand. She knew she had done wrong, but she had sorely repented it, and "I do think the cuckoo might have come back again," she said to herself, "if he is a fairy; and if he isn't it can't be true what Dorcas says."

Her aunts made no allusion to the subject in her presence, and almost seemed to have forgotten that she had known of their distress. They were more grave and silent than usual, but otherwise things went on in their ordinary way. Griselda spent the morning "at her tasks," in the anteroom, but was thankful to get away from the tick-tick of the clock in the corner, and out into the garden.

But there, alas! it was just as bad. The rooks seemed to know that something was the matter; they set to work making such a clatter immediately Griselda appeared that she felt inclined to run back into the house again.

"I am sure they are talking about me," she said

to herself. "Perhaps they are fairies too. I am beginning to think I don't like fairies."

She was glad when bedtime came. It was a sort of reproach to see her aunts so pale and troubled; and though she tried to persuade herself that she thought them very silly, she could not throw off the uncomfortable feeling.

She was so tired when she went to bed—tired in the disagreeable way that comes from a listless, uneasy day—that she fell asleep at once and slept heavily. When she woke, which she did suddenly, and with a start, it was still perfectly dark, like the first morning that she had wakened in the old house. It seemed to her that she had not wakened of herself—something had wakened her. Yes! there it was again, a very, very soft, distant "cuckoo." Was it distant? She could not tell. Almost she could have fancied it was close to her.

"If it's that cuckoo come back again, I'll catch him!" exclaimed Griselda.

She darted out of bed, felt her way to the door, which was closed, and opening it, let in a rush of moonlight from the unshuttered passage window. In another moment her little bare feet were pattering along the passage at full speed, in the direction of the great saloon.

For Griselda's childhood among the troop of

noisy brothers had taught her one lesson—she was afraid of nothing. Or, rather, perhaps I should say she had never learned that there was anything to be afraid of! And is there?

CHAPTER III.

OBEYING ORDERS.

"Little girl, thou must thy part fulfill,
If we're to take kindly to ours:
Then pull up the weeds with a will,
And fairies will cherish the flowers."

THERE was moonlight, though not much, in the saloon and anteroom too; for though the windows, like those in Griselda's bedroom, had the shutters closed, there was a round part at the top, high up which the shutters did not reach to, and in crept, through these clear uncovered panes, quite as many moonbeams, you may be sure, as could find their way.

Griselda, eager though she was, could not help standing still a moment to admire the effect.

"It looks prettier with the light coming in at those holes at the top even if the shutters were open," she said to herself. "How goldy-silvery the cabinet looks; and, yes, I do declare, the mandarins are nodding! I wonder if it is out of politeness to me, or does Aunt Grizzel come in last thing at

night and touch them to make them keep nodding till morning? I suppose they're a sort of policemen to the palace; and I dare say there all sorts of beautiful things inside. How I should like to see all through it!"

But at this moment the faint tick-tick of the cuckoo clock in the next room, reaching her ear, reminded her of the object of this midnight expedition of hers. She hurried into the anteroom.

It looked darker than the great saloon, for it had but one window. But through the uncovered space at the top of this window there penetrated some brilliant moonbeams, one of which lighted up brightly the face of the clock with its queer overhanging eaves.

Griselda approached it and stood below looking up.

"Cuckoo," she said softly—very softly.

But there was no reply.

"Cuckoo," she repeated rather more loudly. "Why won't you speak to me? I know you are there, and you're asleep, for I heard your voice in my own room. Why don't you come out cuckoo?"

"Tick-tick," said the clock; but there was no other reply.

Griselda felt ready to cry.

"Cuckoo," she said reproachfully, "I didn't

think you were so hard-hearted. I have been so unhappy about you, and I was so pleased to hear your voice again, for I thought I had killed you, or hurt you very badly; and I didn't mean to hurt you, cuckoo. I was sorry the moment I had done it, dreadfully sorry. Dear cuckoo, won't you forgive me?"

There was a little sound at last—a faint coming sound, and by the moonlight Griselda saw the doors open, and out flew the cuckoo. He stood still for a moment, looked round him as it were, and then gently flapped his wings, and uttered—"Cuckoo."

Griselda stood in breathless expectation, but in her delight she could not help very softly clapping her hands.

The cuckoo cleared his throat. You never heard such a funny little noise as he made; and then, in a very clear, distinct, but yet "cuckoo-y" voice, he spoke.

"Griselda," he said, "are you truly sorry?"

"I told you I was," she replied, "But I didn't feel so very naughty, cuckoo. I didn't, really. I was only vexed for one minute, and when I threw the book I seemed to be a very little in fun too. And it made me so unhappy when you went away, and my poor aunts have been dreadfully unhappy

too. If you hadn't come back I should have told them to-morrow what I had done. I would have told them before, but I was afraid it would have made them more unhappy. I thought I had hurt you dreadfully."

"So you did," said the cuckoo.

"But you look quite well," said Griselda.

"It was my feelings," replied the cuckoo; "and I couldn't help going away. I have to obey orders like other people."

Griselda stared. "How do you mean?" she asked.

"Never mind. You can't understand at present," said the cuckoo. "You can understand about obeying your orders; and you see, when you don't, things go wrong."

"Yes," said Griselda humbly, "they certainly do. But, cuckoo," she continued, "I never used to get into tempers at home—hardly never, at least; and I liked my lessons then, and I never was scolded about them."

"What's wrong here, then?" said the cuckoo.

"It isn't often that things go wrong in this house."

"That's what Dorcas says," said Griselda. It must be with my being a child—my aunts and the house and everything have got out of children's ways."

"About time they did," remarked the cuckoo. dryly.

"And so," continued Griselda, "it is really very dull. I have lots of lessons, but it isn't so much that I mind. It is that I've no one to play with."

"There's something in that," said the cuckoo. He flapped his wings and was silent for a minute or two. "I'll consider about it he observed at last.

"Thank you," said Griselda, not exactly knowing what else to say.

"And in the meantime," continued the cuckoo, "you'd better obey present orders and go back to bed."

"Shall I say good-night to you, then?" asked Griselda somewhat timidly.

"You're quite welcome to do so," replied the cuckoo. "Why shouldn't you?"

"You see, I wasn't sure if you would like it," returned Griselda; "for of course you're not like a person, and—and—I've been told all sorts of queer things about what fairies like and don't like."

"Who said I was a fairy?" inquired the cuckoo.

"Dorcas did; and of course, my own commonsense did too," replied Griselda. "You must be a fairy—you couldn't be anything else."

"I might be a fairy-fied cuckoo," suggested the bird.

Griselda looked puzzled.

"I don't understand," she said; "and I don't think it could make much difference. But whatever you are, I wish you would tell me one thing."

"What?" said the cuckoo.

"I want to know, now that you've forgiven me for throwing the book at you, have you came back for good?"

"Certainly not for evil," replied the cuckoo.

Griselda gave a little wriggle. "Cuckoo, you're laughing at me," she said. "I mean, have you come back to stay and cuckoo as usual, and make my aunts happy again?"

"You'll see in the morning," said the cuckoo. "Now go off to bed."

"Good-night," said Griselda, "and thank you, and please don't forget to let me know when you've considered."

"Cuckoo, cuckoo," was her little friend's reply. Griselda thought it was meant for good-night, but the fact of the matter was that at that exact second of time it was two o'clock in the morning.

She made her way back to bed. She had been standing for some time talking to the cuckoo; but though it was now well on in November, she did not feel the least cold nor sleepy! She felt as happy and light-hearted as possible; and she wished it was

morning that she might get up. Yet the moment she laid her little brown curly head on the pillow, she fell asleep; and it seemed to her that just as she dropped off, a soft. feathery wing brushed her cheek gently, and a tiny "Cuckoo" sounded in her ear.

When she woke it was bright morning, really bright morning, for the wintry sun was already sending some clear yellow rays out into the pale gray-blue sky.

"It must be late," thought Griselda, when she had opened the shutters and seen how light it was. "I must have slept a long time. "I feel so beautifully unsleepy now. I must dress quickly—how nice it will be to see my aunts look happy again! I don't even care if they scold me for being late."

But, after all, it was not so much later than usual; it was only a much brighter morning than they had had for some time. Griselda did dress herself very quickly, however. As she went downstairs two or three of the clocks in the house, for there were several, were striking eight. These clocks must have been a little before the right time, for it was not till they had again relapsed into silence that there rang out from the anteroom the clear, sweet tones, eight times repeated, of "Cuckoo."

Miss Grizzel and Miss Tabitha were already at the

breakfast-table, but they received their little niece most graciously. Nothing was said about the clock, however, till about half-way through the meal, when Griselda, full of eagerness to know if her aunts were aware of the cuckoo's return, could restrain herself no longer.

"Aunt Grizzel," she said, "isn't the cuckoo all right again?"

"Yes, my dear; I am delighted to say it is," replied Miss Grizzel.

"Did you get it put right, Aunt Grizzel?" inquired Griselda slyly.

"Little girls should not ask so many questions," replied Miss Grizzel mysteriously. "It is all right again, and that is enough. During fifty years that cuckoo has never, till yesterday, missed an hour. If you, in your sphere, my dear, do as well during fifty years, you won't have done badly."

"No, indeed, you won't have done badly," repeated Miss Tabitha.

But though the two old ladies thus tried to improve the occasion by a little lecturing, Griselda could see that, at the bottom of their hearts, they were both so happy that, even if she had been very naughty indeed, they could hardly have made up their minds to scold her.

She was not at all inclined to be naughty this day. She had something to think about and look forward to, which made her quite a different little girl, and made her take heart in doing her lessons as well as she possibly could.

"I wonder when the cuckoo will have considered enough about my having no one to play with?" she said to herself as she was walking up and down the terrace at the back of the house.

"Caw! caw!" screamed a rook just over her head, as if in answer to her thought.

Griselda looked up at him.

"Your voice isn't half so pretty as the cuckoo's, Mr. Rook," she said. "All the same, I dare say I should make friends with you, if I understood what you meant. How funny it would be to know all the languages of the birds and beasts, like the prince in the fairy tale! I wonder if I should wish for that, if a fairy gave me a wish? No, I dont think I would. I'd far rather have the fairy carpet, that would take you anywhere you liked in a minute. I'd go to China to see if all the people there looked like Aunt Grizzel's mandarins; and I'd first of all, of course, go to fairy-land."

"You must come in now, little missie," said Dorcas voice. "Miss Grizzel says you have had play enough, and there's a nice fire in the anteroom for you to do your lessons by."

"Play!" repeated Griselda indignantly as she turned to follow the old servant. "Do you call walking up and down the terrace 'play,' Dorcas? I mustn't loiter even to pick a flower, if there were any, for fear of catching cold, and I musn't run for fear of overheating myself. I declare, Dorcas, if I don't have some play soon, or something to amuse me, I think I'll run away."

"Nay, nay, missie, don't talk like that. You'd never do anything so naughty, and you so like Miss Sybilla, who was so good.

"Dorcas, I'm tired of being told I'm like Miss Sybilla," said Griselda impatiently. "She was my grandmother; no one would like to be told they were like their grandmother. It makes me feel as if my face must be all screwy-up and wrinkly, and as if I should have spectacles on, and a wig."

"That is not like what Miss Sybilla was when I first saw her," said Dorcas. "She was younger than you, missie, and as pretty as a fairy."

"Was she?" exclaimed Griselda, stopping short.

"Yes, indeed she was. She might have been a fairy, so sweet she was and gentle—and yet so merry. Every creature loved her; even the animals about seemed to know her, as if she was one of themselves. She brought good luck to the house, and it was a sad day when she left it."

"I thought you said it was the cuckoo that brought good luck?" said Griselda.

"Well, so it was. The cuckoo and Miss Sybilla came here the same day. It was left to her by her mother's father, with whom she had lived since she was a baby, and when he died she came here to her sisters. She wasn't own sister to my ladies, you see, missie. Her mother had come from Germany; and it was in some strange place there, where her grandfather lived, that the cuckoo clock was made. They make wonderful clocks there, I've been told, but none more wonderful than our cuckoo, I'm sure."

"No, I'm sure not," said Griselda softly. "Why didn't Miss Sybilla take it with her when she was married and went away?"

"She knew her sisters were so fond of it. It was like a memory of her left behind for them. It was like a part of her. And do you know, missie, the night she died—she died soon after your father was born, a year after she was married—for a whole hour, from twelve to one, that cuckoo went on cukooing in a soft, sad was, like some living creature in trouble. Of course, we did not know anything was wrong with her, and folks said something had caught some of the springs of the works; but I didn't think so, and never shall. And—"

But here Dorcas' reminiscences were abruptly brought to a close by Miss Grizzel's appearance at the other end of the terrace.

"Griselda, what are you loitering so for? Dorcas, you should have hastened, not delayed Miss Griselda."

So Griselda was hurried off to her lessons, and Dorcas to her kitchen. But Griselda did not much mind. She had plenty to think of and wonder about, and she liked to do her lessons in the anteroom, with the tick-tick of the clock in her ears, and the feeling that perhaps the cuckoo was watching her through some invisible peep-hole in his closed doors.

"And if he sees," thought Griselda, "if he sees how hard I am trying to do my lessons well, it will perhaps make him quick about 'considering.'"

So she did try very hard. And she didn't speak to the cuckoo when he came out to say it was four o'clock. She was busy and he was busy. She felt it was better to wait till he gave her some sign of being ready to talk to her again.

For fairies, you know, children, however charming, are sometimes rather queer to have to do with. They don't like to be interfered with, or treated except with very great respect; and they have their own ideas about what is proper and what isn't, I can assure you.

I suppose it was with working so hard at her lessons—most people would say it was with having been up the night before, running about the house in the moonlight; but as she had never felt so "fresh" in her life as when she got up that morning, it could hardly have been that—that Griselda felt so tired and sleepy that evening, she could hardly keep her eyes open. She begged to go to bed quite half an hour earlier than usual, which made Miss Tabitha afraid again that she was going to be ill. But as there is nothing better for children than to go to bed early, even if they are going to be ill, Miss Grizzel told her to say good-night, and to ask Dorcas to give her wine-glassful of elderberry wine, nice and hot, after she was in bed.

Griselda had no objection to the elderberry wine, though she felt she was having it on false pretenses. She certainly did not need it to send her to sleep, for almost before her head touched the pillow she was as sound as a top. She had slept a good long while, when again she awakened suddenly—just as she had done the night before, and again with the feeling that something had awakened her. And the queer thing was that the moment she was awake she felt so very awake—she had no inclination to stretch and yawn, and hope it wasn't quite time to

get up, and think how nice and warm bed was, and how cold it was outside! She sat straight up, and peered out into the darkness, feeling quite ready for an adventure.

"It is you, cuckoo?" she said softly.

There was no answer; but, listening intently, the child fancied she heard a faint rustling or fluttering in the corner of the room by the door. She got up and, feeling her way, opened it; and the instant she had done so she heard, a few steps only in front of her, it seemed, the familiar notes, very very soft and whispered, "Cuckoo, cuckoo."

It went on and on, down the passage, Griselda trotting after. There was no moon to-night; heavy clouds had quite hidden it, and outside the rain was falling heavily. Griselda could hear it on the window-panes, through the closed shutters and all. But, dark as it was, she made her way along without any difficulty, down the passage, across the great saloon, in through the anteroom door, guided only by the little voice now and then to be heard in front of her. She came to a standstill right before the clock, and stood there for a minute or two, patiently waiting.

She had not very long to wait. There came the usual murmuring sound, then the doors above the clock face opened—she heard them open, it was far

too dark to see—and in his ordinary voice, clear and distinct (it was just two o'clock, so the cuckoo was killing two birds with one stone, telling the hour and greeting Griselda at once), the bird sang out, "Cuckoo, cuckoo."

"Good-evening, cuckoo," said Griselda when he had finished.

"Good-morning, you mean," said the cuckoo.

"Good-morning, then, cuckoo," said Griselda. "Have you considered about me, cuckoo?"

The cuckoo cleared his throat.

"Have you learned to obey orders yet, Griselda?" he inquired.

"I'm trying," replied Griselda. "But you see, cuckoo, I've not had very long to learn it—it was only last night you told me, you know."

The cuckoo sighed.

"You've a great deal to learn, Griselda."

"I dare say I have," she said. "But I can tell you one thing, cuckoo—whatever lessons I have, I couldn't ever have any worse than those addition sums of Mr. Kneebreeches'. I have made up my mind about that, for to-day do you know, cuckoo—"

"Yesterday," corrected the cuckoo. "Always be exact in your statements, Griselda."

"Well, yesterday, then," said Griselda rather

tartly; though when you know quite well what I mean, I don't see that you need be so very particular. Well, as I was saying, I tried and tried, but still they were fearful. They were, indeed."

"You've a great deal to learn, Griselda," repeated the cuckoo.

"I wish you wouldn't say that so often," said Griselda. "I thought you were going to play with me."

"There's something in that," said the cuckoo, "there's something in that. I should like to talk about it. But we could talk more comfortably if you would come up here and sit beside me."

Griselda thought her friend must be going out of his mind.

"Sit beside you up there!" she exclaimed. "Cuckoo, how could I? I'm far, far too big."

"Big!" returned the cuckoo. "What do you mean by big? It's all a matter of fancy. Don't you know that if the world and everything in it, counting yourself of course, were all made little enough to go into a walnut, you'd never find out the difference?"

"Wouldn't I?" said Griselda, feeling rather muddled; "but not counting myself, cuckoo, I would then, wouldn't I?"

"Nonsense," said the cuckoo hastily; "you've a

great deal to learn, and one thing is, not to argue. Nobody should argue; it's a shocking bad habit, and ruins the digestion. Come up here and sit beside me comfortably. Catch hold of the chain; you'll find you can manage if you try."

"But it'll stop the clock," said Griselda. "Aunt Grizzel said I was never to touch the weights or the chains."

"Stuff," said the cuckoo; "it won't stop the clock. Catch hold of the chains and swing yourself up. There now—I told you you could manage it."

CHAPTER IV.

THE COUNTRY OF THE NODDING MANDARINS.

"We're all nodding, nid-nid-nodding."

How she managed it she never knew; but somehow or other it was managed. She seemed to slide up the chain just as easily as in a general way she would have slid down, only without any disagreeable anticipation of a bump at the end of the journey. And when she got to the top how wonderfully different it looked from anything she could have expected! The doors stood open; and Griselda found them quite big enough, or herself quite small enough—which it was she couldn't tell, and as it was all a matter of fancy, she decided not to trouble to inquire—to pass through quite comfortably.

And inside there was the most charming little snuggery imaginable. It was something like a saloon railway carriage—it seemed to be all lined and carpeted and everything, with rich mossy vel-

vet; there was a little round table in the middle and two arm-chairs, on one of which sat the cuckoo —"quite like other people," thought Griselda to herself—while the other, as he pointed out to Griselda by a little nod, was evidently intended for her.

"Thank you," said she, sitting down on the chair as she spoke,

"Are you comfortable?" asked the cuckoo.

"Quite," replied Griselda, looking about her with great satisfaction. "Are all the cuckoo clocks like this when you get inside them?" she inquired. "I can't think how there's room for this dear little place between the clock and the wall. Is it a hole cut out of the wall on purpose, cuckoo?"

"Hush!" said the cuckoo, "we've got other things to talk about. First, shall I lend you one of my mantles? You may feel cold."

"I dont just now." replied Griselda; "but perhaps I might."

She looked at her little bare feet as she spoke, and wondered why they weren't cold, for it was very chilblainy weather.

The cuckoo stood up, and with one of his claws reached from a corner, where it was hanging, a cloak which Griselda had not before noticed. For it was hanging wrong side out, and the lining was red velvet, very like what the sides of the little

room were covered with, so it was no wonder she had not noticed it.

Had it been hanging the right side out she must have done so; this side was so very wonderful!

It was all feathers—feathers of every shade and color, but beautifully worked in, somehow, so as to lie quite smoothly and evenly; one color melting away into another like those in a prism, so that you could hardly tell where one began and another ended.

"What a lovely cloak!" said Griselda, wrapping it round her, and feeling even more comfortable than before as she watched the rays of the little lamp in the roof—I think I was forgetting to tell you that the cuckoo's boudoir was lighted by a dear little lamp set into the red velvet roof like a pearl in a ring—playing softly on the brilliant colors of the feather mantle.

"It's better than lovely," said the cuckoo, "as you shall see. Now, Griselda," he continued, in the tone of one coming to business, "now, Griselda, let us talk."

"We have been talking," said Griselda, "ever so long. I am very comfortable. When you say 'Let us talk' like that it makes me forget all I wanted to say. Just let me sit still and say whatever comes into my head."

"That won't do," said the cuckoo; "we must have a plan of action."

"A what?" said Griselda.

"You see, you have a great deal to learn," said the cuckoo triumphantly. "You dont understand what I say."

"But I didn't come up here to learn," said Griselda; "I can do that down there;" and she nodded her head in the direction of the anteroom table. "I want to play."

"Just so," said the cuckoo; "that's what I want to talk about. What do you call 'play.'—blind-man's buff and that sort of thing?"

"No," said Griselda, considering. "I'm getting rather too big for that kind of play. Besides, cuckoo, you and I alone couldn't have much fun at blind-man's buff; there'd be only me to catch, or you you to catch me."

"Oh, we could easily get more," said the cuckoo. "The mandarins would be pleased to join."

"The mandarins!" repeated Griselda. "Why, cuckoo, the're not alive! How could they play?"

The cuckoo looked at her gravely for a minute, then shook his head.

"You have a great deal to learn," he said solemnly. "Don't you know that everything's alive?"

"No," said Griselda, "I don't; and I don't know

what you mean, and I don't think I want to know what you mean. I want to talk about playing."

"Well," said the cuckoo, "talk."

"What I call playing," pursued Griselda, "is—I have thought about it now, you see—is being amused. If you will amuse me, cuckoo, I will count that you are playing with me."

"How shall I amuse you?" inquired he.

"Oh, that's for you to find out!" exclaimed Griselda. "You might tell me fairy stories, you know; if you're a fairy, you should know lots; or—oh yes, of course that would be far nicer—if you are a fairy, you might take me with you to fairy-land."

Again the cuckoo shook his head.

"That," said he, "I cannot do."

"Why not?" said Griselda. "Lots of children have been there."

"I doubt it," said the cuckoo. "Some may have been, but not lots. And some may have thought they had been there who hadn't really been there at all. And as to those who have been there, you may be sure of one thing—they were not taken, they found their own way. No one was ever taken to fairy-land—to the real fairy-land. They may have been taken to the neighboring countries, but not to fairy-land itself."

"And how is one ever to find one's own way there?" asked Griselda.

"That I cannot tell you either," replied the cuckoo. "There are many roads there; you may find yours some day. And if ever you do find it, be sure you keep what you see of it well swept and clean, and then you may see further after awhile. Ah, yes, there are many roads and many doors into fairy-land."

"Doors!" cried Griselda, "Are there any doors into fairy-land in this house?"

"Several, said the cuckoo; but don't waste your time looking for them at present. It would be no use."

"Then how will you amuse me?" inquired Griselda, in a rather disappointed tone.

"Don't you care to go anywhere except to fairy-land?" said the cuckoo.

"Oh, yes; there are lots of places I wouldn't mind seeing. Not geography sort of places—it would be just like lessons to go to India and Africa and all those places—but queer places like the mines where the goblins make diamonds and precious stones, and the caves down under the sea where the mermaids live. And—oh, I've just thought—now I'm so nice and little, I would like to go all over the mandarins' palace in the great saloon."

"That can be easily managed," said the cuckoo; "but—excuse me for an instant," he exclaimed sud-

denly. He gave a spring forward and disappeared. Then Griselda heard his voice outside the doors. "Cuckoo, cuckoo, cuckoo." It was three o'clock.

The doors opened again to let him through, and he resettled himself on his chair. "As I was saying," he went on, "nothing could be easier. But that palace, as you call it, has an entrance on the other side, as well as the one you know."

"Another door, do you mean?" said Griselda. "How funny! Does it go through the wall? And where does it lead to?"

"It leads," replied the cuckoo, "it leads to the country of the Nodding Mandarins."

"What fun!" exclaimed Griselda, clapping her hands, "Cuckoo, do let us go there. How can we get down? You can fly, but must I slide down the chain again?"

"Oh, dear no," said the cuckoo, "by no means. You have only to stretch out your feather mantle, flap it as if it was wings—so"—he flapped his own wings encouragingly—"wish, and there you'll be."

"Where?" said Griselda bewilderedly.

"Wherever you wish to be, of course," said the cuckoo. "Are you ready? Here goes."

"Wait—wait a moment," cried Griselda. "Where am I to wish to be?"

"Bless the child!" exclaimed the cuckoo. "Where do you wish to be? You said you wanted to visit the country of the nodding Mandarins."

"Yes; but am I to wish to be in the palace in the great saloon?"

"Certainly," replied the cuckoo. "That is the entrance to Mandarin Land, and you said you would like to see through it. So—you're surely ready now?"

"A thought has just struck me," said Griselda. "How will you know what o'clock it is, so as to come back in time to tell the next hour? My aunts will get into such a fright if you go wrong again! Are you sure you will have time to go to the mandarins' country to-night?"

"Time!" repeated the cuckoo; "what is time? Ah, Griselda, you have a very great deal to learn! What do you mean by time?"

"I don't know," replied Griselda, feeling rather snubbed. "Being slow or quick—I suppose that's what I mean."

"And what is slow, and what is quick?" said the cuckoo. "All a matter of fancy! If everything that's been done since the world's been made till now was done over again in five minutes, you'd never know the difference."

"Oh, cuckoo, I wish you wouldn't!" cried poor

Griselda; "you're worse than sums, you do so puzzle me. It's like what you said about nothing being big or little, only it's worse. Where would all the days and hours be if there was nothing but minutes? Oh, cuckoo, you said you'd amuse me, and you do nothing but puzzle me."

"It was your own fault. You wouldn't get ready," said the cuckoo. "Now, here goes! Flap and wish."

Griselda flapped and wished. She felt a sort of rustle in the air, that was all—then she found herself standing with the cuckoo in front of the Chinese cabinet, the door of which stood open, while the mandarins on each side, nodding politely, seemed to invite them to enter. Griselda hesitated.

"Go on," said the cuckoo patronizingly; "ladies first."

Griselda went on. To her surprise, inside the cabinet it was quite light, though where the light came from that illuminated all the queer corners and recesses and streamed out to the front, where stood the mandarins, she could not discover.

The "palace" was not quite as interesting as she had expected. There were lots of of little rooms in it opening on to balconies commanding, no doubt, a splendid view of the great saloon; there were ever so many little stair-cases leading to more little

rooms and balconies, but it all seemed empty and deserted.

"I don't care for it," said Griselda, stopping short at last; "it's all the same, and there's nothing to see; I thought my aunts kept ever so many beautiful things in here, and there's nothing."

"Come along, then," said the cuckoo. "I didn't expect you'd care for the palace, as you called it, much. Let us go out the other way."

He hopped down a sort of little staircase near which they were standing, and Griselda followed him willingly enough. At the foot they found themselves in a vestibule, much handsomer than the entrance at the other side; and the cuckoo, crossing it, lifted one of his claws and touched a spring in the wall. Instantly a pair of large doors flew open in the middle, revealing to Griselda, the prettiest and most curious sight she had ever seen.

A flight of wide, shallow steps led down from this doorway into a long, long avenue bordered by stiffly growing trees, from the branches of which hung innumerable lamps of every color, making a perfect network of brilliance as far as the eye could reach.

"Oh, how lovely!" cried Griselda, clapping her hands. "It'll be like walking along a rainbow. Cuckoo, come quick."

"Stop," said the cuckoo; we've a good way to go. There's no need to walk. Palanquin!"

He flapped his wings, and instantly a palanquin appeared at the foot of the steps. It was made of carved ivory, and borne by four Chinese-looking figures with pigtails and bright-colored jackets. A feeling came over Griselda that she was dreaming, or else she had seen this palanquin before. She hesitated. Suddenly she gave a little jump of satisfaction.

"I know!" she exclaimed. "It's exactly like the one that stands under a glass shade on Lady Lavender's drawing-room mantle-piece. I wonder if it is the very one? Fancy me being able to get into it!"

She looked at the four bearers. Instantly they all nodded.

"What do they mean?" asked Griselda, turning to the cuckoo.

"Get in," he replied.

"Yes, I'm just going to get in," she said; "but what do they mean when they nod at me like that?"

They mean, of course, what I tell you—'Get in,'" said the cuckoo.

"Why don't they say so then?" persisted Griselda, getting in, however, as she spoke.

"Griselda, you have a very great——" began the cuckoo, but Griselda interrupted him.

"Cuckoo," she exclaimed, "if you say that again, I'll jump out of the palanquin and run away home to bed. Of course I've a great deal to learn—that's why I like to ask questions about everything I see. Now tell me where we are going."

"In the first place," said the cuckoo, "are you comfortable?"

"Very," said Griselda, settling herself down among the cushions.

It was a change from the cuckoo's boudoir. There were no chairs or seats, only a number of very, very soft cushions covered with green silk. There were green silk curtains all round, too, which you could draw or not as you pleased, just by touching a spring. Griselda stroked the silk gently. It was not "fruzzley" silk, if you know what that means; it did not make you feel as if your nails wanted cutting, or as if all the rough places on your skin were being rubbed up the wrong way; its softness was like that of a rose or a pansy petal.

"What nice silk!" said Griselda. "I'd like a dress of it. I never noticed that the palanquin was lined so nicely," she continued, "for I suppose it is the one from Lady Lavender's mantle-piece?

There couldn't be two so exactly like each other."

The cuckoo gave a sort of whistle.

"What a goose you are, my dear!" he exclaimed.

"Excuse me," he continued, seeing that Griselda looked rather offended; "I didn't mean to hurt your feelings, but you won't let me say the other thing, you know. The palanquin from Lady Lavender's! I should think not. You might as well mistake one of those horrible paper roses that Dorcas sticks in her vases for one of your aunt's Gloires de Dijon! The palanquin from Lady Lavender's—a clumsy human imitation not worth looking at!"

"I didnt know," said Griselda humbly. "Do they make such beautiful things in Mandarin Land?"

"Of course," said the cuckoo.

Griselda sat silent for a minute or two, but very soon she recovered her spirits.

"Will you please tell me where we are going? she asked again.

"You'll see directly," said the cuckoo; not that I mind telling you. There's to be a grand reception at one of the palaces to-night. I thought you'd like to assist at it. It'll give you some idea of what a palace is like. By the by, can you dance?"

"A little," replied Griselda.

"Ah, well, I dare say you will manage. I've ordered a court dress for you. It will be all ready when we get there."

"Thank you," said Griselda.

In a minute or two the palanquin stopped. The cuckoo got out, and Griselda followed him.

She found that they were at the entrance to a very much grander palace than the one in her aunt's saloon. The steps leading up to the door were very wide and shallow, and covered with a gold embroidered carpet, which looked as if it would be prickly to her bare feet, but which, on the contrary, when she trod upon it, felt softer than the softest moss. She could see very little besides carpet; for at each side of the steps stood rows and rows of mandarins, all something like, but a great deal grander than, the pair outside her aunt's cabinet; and as the cuckoo hopped and Griselda walked up the staircase, they all, in turn, row by row, began solemnly to nod. It gave them the look of a field of very high grass, through which any one passing leaves for the moment a trail, till all the heads bob up again into their places.

"What do they mean?" whispered Griselda.

"It's a royal salute," said the cuckoo.

"A salute!" said Griselda. "I thought that meant kissing or guns!"

"Hush!" said the cuckoo, for by this time they had arrived at the top of the staircase; "you must be dressed now."

Two mandariny-looking young ladies, with porcelain faces and three-cornered head-dresses, stepped forward and led Griselda into a small anteroom, where lay waiting for her the most magnificent dress you ever saw. But how do you think they dressed her? It was all by nodding. They nodded to the blue and silver embroidered jacket, and in a moment it had fitted itself on to her. They nodded to the splendid scarlet satin skirt, made very short in front and very long behind, and before Griselda knew where she was, it was adjusted quite correctly. They nodded to the head-dress, and the sashes, and the necklaces and bracelets, and forthwith they all arranged themselves. Last of all, they nodded to the dearest, sweetest little pair of high-heeled shoes imaginable—all silver, and blue, and gold, and scarlet, and everything mixed up together, only they were rather a stumpy shape about the toes, and Griselda's bare feet were incased in them, and, to her surprise, quite comfortably so.

"They don't hurt me a bit," she said aloud; "yet they didn't look the least the shape of my foot."

But her attendants only nodded; and turning

round, she saw the cuckoo waiting for her. He did not speak either, rather to her annoyance, but gravely led the way through one grand room after another to the grandest of all, where the entertainment was evidently just about to begin. And everywhere there were mandarins, rows and rows, who all set to work nodding as fast as Griselda appeared. She began to be rather tired of royal salutes, and was glad when at last, in profound silence, the procession, consisting of the cuckoo and herself, and about half a dozen "mandarins," came to a halt before a kind of dias, or raised seat, at the end of the hall.

Upon this dias stood a chair—a throne of some kind, Griselda supposed it to be—and upon this was seated the grandest and gravest personage she had yet seen.

"Is he king of the mandarins?" she whispered. But the cuckoo did not reply; and before she had time to repeat the question, the very grand and grave person got down from his seat, and coming toward her, offered her his hand, at the same time nodding—first once, then two or three times together, then once again. Griselda seemed to know what he meant. He was asking her to dance.

"Thank you," she said. "I can't dance very well, but perhaps you won't mind."

The king, if that was his title, took not the slightest notice of her reply, but nodded again—once, then two or three times together, then once alone, just as before. Griselda did not know what to do, when suddenly she felt something poking her head. It was the cuckoo—he had lifted his claw, and was tapping her head to make her nod. So she nodded—once, twice together, then once—that appeared to be enough. The king nodded once again; an invisible band suddenly struck up the loveliest music, and off they set to the places of honor reserved for them in the centre of the room, where all the mandarins were assembling.

What a dance that was! It began like a minuet and ended something like the hay-makers. Griselda had not the least idea what the figures or steps were, but it did not matter. If she did not know, her shoes or something about her did; for she got on famously. The music was lovely—"so the mandarins can't be deaf, though they are dumb," thought Griselda, "which is one good thing about them." The king seemed to enjoy it as much as she did, though he never smiled or laughed; any one could have seen he liked it by the way he whirled and twirled himself about. And between the figures, when they stopped to rest for a little, Griselda got on very well too. There was no conversation, or rather, if there was, it was all nodding.

So Griselda nodded too, and though she did not know what her nods meant, the king seemed to understand and be quite pleased; and when they had nodded enough, the music struck up again, and off they set, harder than before.

And every now and then tiny little mandariny boys appeared with trays filled with the most delicious fruits and sweetmeats. Griselda was not a greedy child, but for once in her life she really did feel rather so. I cannot possibly describe these delicious things; just think of whatever in all your life was the most "lovely" thing you ever ate, and you may be sure they tasted like that. Only the cuckoo would not eat any, which rather distressed Griselda. He walked about among the dancers, apparently quite at home; and the mandarins did not seem at all surprised to see him, though he did look rather odd, being nearly, if not quite, as big as any of them. Griselda hoped he was enjoying himself, considering that she had to thank him for all the fun she was having; but she felt a little conscience-stricken when she saw that he wouldn't eat anything.

"Cuckoo," she whispered; she dared not talk out loud—it would have seemed so remarkable, you see. "Cuckoo," she said, very, very softly, "I wish you would eat something. "You'll be so tired and hungry."

"No, thank you," said the cuckoo; and you can't think how pleased Grisela was at having succeeded in making him speak. "It isn't my way. I hope you are enjoying yourself?"

"Oh, very much," said Griselda. I—"

"Hush!" said the cuckoo; and looking up, Griselda saw a number of mandarins, in a sort of procession, coming their way.

When they got up to the cuckoo they set to work nodding, two or three at a time, more energetically than usual. When they stopped the cuckoo nodded in return, and then hopped off toward the middle of the room.

"They're very fond of good music, you see," he whispered as he passed Grisela; "and they don't often get it."

CHAPTER V.

PICTURES.

"And she is always beautiful,
And always is eighteen!"

When he got to the middle of the room the cuckoo cleared his throat, flapped his wings and began to sing. Griselda was quite astonished. She had had no idea that her friend was so accomplished. It wasn't "cuckooing" at all; it was real singing, like that of the nightingale or the thrush, or like something prettier than either. It made Griselda think of woods in summer, and of tinkling brooks flowing through them, with the pretty brown pebbles sparkling up through the water; and then it made her think of something sad—she didn't know what; perhaps it was of the babes in the wood, and the robins covering them up with leaves—and then again, in a moment, it sounded as if all the merry elves and sprites that ever were heard of had escaped from fairy-land, and were

rolling over and over with peals of rollicking laughter. And at last, all of a sudden, the song came to an end.

"Cuckoo! cuckoo! cuckoo!" rang out three times, clear and shrill. The cuckoo flapped his wings, made a bow to the mandarins, and retired to his old corner.

There was no buzz of talk, as is usual after a performance has come to a close; but there was a great buzz of nodding, and Griselda, wishing to give the cuckoo as much praise as she could, nodded as hard as any of them. The cuckoo really looked quite shy at receiving so much applause. But in a minute or two the music struck up and dancing began again—one, two, three, it seemed a sort of mazurka this time, which suited the mandarins very well, as it gave them a chance of nodding to mark the time.

Griselda had once learned the mazurka; so she got on even better than before—only she would have liked it more if her shoes had had sharper toes; they looked so stumpy when she tried to point them. All the same, it was very good fun; and she was not too well pleased when she suddenly felt the little sharp tap of the cuckoo on her head, and heard him whisper:

"Griselda, it's time to go."

"Oh, dear, why?" she asked. "I'm not a bit tired. Why need we go yet?"

"Obeying orders," said the cuckoo; and after that, Griselda dared not say another word. It was very nearly as bad as being told she had a great deal to learn.

"Must I say good-bye to the king and all the people?" she inquired; but before the cuckoo had time to answer she gave a little squeal. "Oh, cuckoo," she cried, "you've trod on my foot."

"I beg your pardon," said the cuckoo.

"I must take off my shoe; it does hurt so," she went on.

"Take it off, then," said the cuckoo.

Griselda stooped to take off her shoe. "Are we going home in the pal——" she began to say; but she never finished the sentence, for just as she had got her shoe off she felt the cuckoo throw something round her. It was the feather mantle.

And Griselda knew nothing more till she opened her eyes the next morning, and saw the first early rays of sunshine peeping in through the chinks of the closed shutters of her little bedroom.

She rubbed her eyes and sat up in bed. Could it have been a dream?

"What could have made me fall asleep so all of a sudden?" she thought. "I wasn't the least sleepy

at the mandarins' ball. What fun it was! I believe that cuckoo made me fall asleep on purpose to make me fancy it was a dream. Was it a dream?"

She began to feel confused and doubtful when suddenly she felt something hurting her arm, like a little lump in bed. She felt with her hand to see if she could smooth it away, and drew out—one of the shoes belonging to her court dress! The very one she had held in her hand at the moment the cuckoo had spirited her home again to bed.

"Ah, Mr. Cuckoo!" she exclaimed, "you meant to play me a trick, but you haven't succeeded, you see."

She jumped out of bed and unfastened one of the window-shutters, and then jumped in again to admire the little shoe in comfort. It was even prettier than she had thought it at the ball. She held it up and looked at it. It was about the size of the first joint of her little finger. "To think that I should have been dancing with you on, last night!" she said to the shoe. "And yet the cuckoo says being big or little is all a matter of fancy. I wonder what he'll think of to amuse me next?"

She was still holding up the shoe and admiring it, when Dorcas came with the hot water.

"Look,- Dorcas," she said.

"Bless me, it's one of the shoes off the Chinese dolls in the saloon," exclaimed the old servant. "How ever did you get that, missie? Your aunts wouldn't be pleased."

"It just isn't one of the Chinese dolls' shoes; and if you don't believe me, you can go and look for yourself," said Griselda. "It's my very own shoe, and it was given me to my own self."

Dorcas looked at her curiously, but said no more, only as she was going out of the room Griselda heard her saying something about "so very like Miss Sybilla."

"I wonder what 'Miss Sybilla' was like?" thought Griselda. "I have a good mind to ask the cuckoo. He seems to have known her pretty well."

It was not for some days that Griselda had a chance of asking the cuckoo anything. She saw and heard nothing of him—nothing, that is to say, but his regular appearance to tell the hours as usual.

"I suppose," thought Griselda, "he thinks the mandarins' ball was fun enough to last me a good while. It really was very good-natured of him to take me to it, so I mustn't grumble."

A few days after this poor Griselda caught cold. It was not a very bad cold, I must confess, but her

aunts made rather a fuss about it. They wanted her to stay in bed, but to this Griselda so much objected that they did not insist upon it.

"It would be so dull," she said piteously. "Please let me stay in the anteroom, for all my things are there; and, then, there's the cuckoo."

Aunt Grizzel smiled at this, and Griselda got her way. But even in the anteroom it was rather dull. Miss Grizzel and Miss Tabitha were obliged to go out, to drive all the way to Merrybrow Hall, as Lady Lavender sent a messager to say that she had an attack of influenza, and wished to see her friends at once.

Miss Tabitha began to cry—she was so tender-hearted.

"Troubles never come singly," said Miss Grizzel, by way of consolation.

"No, indeed, they never come singly," said Miss Tabitha, shaking her head and wiping her eyes.

So off they set; and Griselda in her arm-chair by the anteroom fire, with some queer little old-fashioned books of her aunts', which she had already read more than a dozen times, beside her by way of amusement, felt that there was one comfort in her troubles—she had escaped the long, weary drive to her godmother's.

But it was very dull. It got duller and duller.

Griselda curled herself up in her chair, and wished she could go to sleep, though feeling quite sure she couldn't, for she had stayed in bed much later than usual this morning, and had been obliged to spend the time in sleeping, for want of anything better to do.

She looked up at the clock.

"I don't know even what to wish for," she said to herself. "I don't feel the least inclined to play at anything, and I shouldn't care to go to the mandarins again. Oh, cuckoo, cuckoo, I am so dull! couldn't you think of anything to amuse me?"

It was not near "any o'clock." But after waiting a minute or two, it seemed to Griselda that she heard the soft sound of "coming" that always preceded the cuckoo's appearance. She was right. In another moment she heard his usual greeting, "Cuckoo, cuckoo!"

"Oh, cuckoo!" she exclaimed, "I am so glad you have come at last. I am so dull, and it has nothing to do with lessons this time. It's that I've got such a bad cold, and my head's aching, and I'm so tired of reading all by myself."

"What would you like to do?" said the cuckoo. "You don't want to go see the mandarins again?"

"Oh, no; I couldn't dance."

"Or the mermaids down under the sea?"

"Oh, dear, no," said Griselda, with a little shiver; "it would be far too cold. I would just like to stay where I am, if some one would tell me stories. I'm not even sure that I could listen to stories. What could you do to amuse me, cuckoo?"

"Would you like to see some pictures?" said the cuckoo. "I could show you pictures without your taking any trouble."

"Oh, yes, that would be beautiful," cried Griselda. "What pictures will you show me? Oh, I know. I would like to see the place where you were born—where that very, very clever man made you and the clock, I mean."

"Your great-great-grandfather," said the cuckoo. "Very well. Now, Griselda, shut your eyes. First of all, I am going to sing."

Griselda shut her eyes, and the cuckoo began his song. It was something like what he had sung at the mandarins' palace, only even more beautiful. It was so soft and dreamy, Griselda felt as if she could have sat there forever listening to it.

The first notes were low and murmuring. Again they made Griselda think of little rippling brooks in summer, and now and then there came a sort of hum as of insects buzzing in the warm sunshine near. This humming gradually increased, till at last Griselda was conscious of nothing more—

everything seemed to be humming, herself too, till at last she fell asleep.

When she opened her eyes, the anteroom and everything in it, except the arm-chair on which she was still curled up, had disappeared—melted away into a misty cloud all round her, which in turn gradually faded, till before her she saw a scene quite new and strange. It was the first of the cuckoo's "pictures."

An old, quaint room, with a high, carved mantlepiece and a bright fire sparkling in the grate. It was not a pretty room—it had more the look of a workshop of some kind; but it was curious and interesting. All round, the walls were hung with clocks and strange mechanical toys. There was a fiddler slowly fiddling, a gentleman and lady slowly dancing a minuet, a little man drawing up water in a bucket out of the glass vase in which gold fish were swimming about—all sorts of queer figures; and the clocks were even queerer. There was one intended to represent the sun, moon and planets, with one face for the sun and another for the moon, and gold and silver stars slowly circling round them; there was another clock with a tiny trumpeter perched on a ledge above the face, who blew a horn for the hours. I cannot tell you half the strange and wonderful things there were.

Griselda was so interested in looking at all these queer machines that she did not for some time observe the occupant of the room. And no wonder; he was sitting in front of a little table, so perfectly still, much more still than the unliving figures around him. He was examining, with a magnifying glass, some small object he held, in his hand so closely and intently that Griselda, forgetting she was only looking at a "picture," almost held her breath for fear she should disturb him. He was a very old man; his coat was worn and threadbare in several places, looking as if he spent a great part of his life in one position. Yet he did not look poor; and his face, when at last he lifted it, was mild and intelligent and very earnest.

While Griselda was watching him closely, there came a soft tap at the door, and a little girl danced into the room. The dearest little girl you ever saw, and so funnily dressed! Her thick brown hair, rather lighter than Griselda's, was tied in two long plaits down her back. She had a short red skirt with silver braid round the bottom, and a white chemisette with beautiful lace at the throat and wrists, and over that again a black velvet bodice, also trimmed with silver. And she had a great many trinkets, necklaces and bracelets, and earrings, and a sort of little silver coronet; no, it was

not like a coronet, it was a band with a square piece of silver fastened so as to stand up at each side of her head something like a horse's blinkers, only they were not placed over her eyes.

She made quite a jingle as she came into the room, and the old man looked up with a smile of pleasure.

"Well, my darling, and are you ready for your feast?" he said; and though the language in which he spoke was quite strange to Griselda, she understood his meaning perfectly well.

"Yes, dear grandfather; and isn't my dress lovely?" said the child. "I should be so happy if only you were coming too, and would get yourself a beautiful velvet coat like Mynheer van Huyten.

The old man shook his head.

"I have no time for such things, my darling," he replied; "and besides, I am too old. I must work —work hard to make money for my pet when I am gone, that she may not be dependent on the bounty of those English sisters."

"But I won't care for money when you are gone, grandfather," said the child, her eyes filling with tears. "I would rather just go on living in this little house; and I am sure the neighbors would give me something to eat, and then I could hear all your clocks ticking and think of you. I don't want you

to sell all your wonderful things for money for me, grandfather. They would remind me of you, and money wouldn't."

"Not all, Sybilla, not all," said the old man. "The best of all, the masterpiece of my life, shall not be sold. It shall be yours, and you will have in your possession a clock that crowned heads might seek in vain to purchase."

His dim old eyes brightened, and for a moment he sat erect and strong.

"Do you mean the cuckoo clock?" said Sybilla, in a low voice.

"Yes, my darling, the cuckoo clock, the crowning work of my life—a clock that shall last long after I, and perhaps thou, my pretty child, are crumbling into dust; a clock that shall last to tell my great-grandchildren to many generations that the old Dutch mechanic was not altogether to be despised."

Sybilla sprang into his arms.

"You are not to talk like that, little grandfather," she said. "I shall teach my children and my grandchildren to be so proud of you—oh, so proud!—as proud as I am of you, little grandfather!"

"Gently, my darling," said the old man as he placed carefully on the table the delicate piece of

mechanism he held in his hand and tenderly embraced the child. "Kiss me once again, my pet, and then thou must go; thy little friends will be waiting."

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As he said these words the mist slowly gathered again before Griselda's eyes—the first of the cuckoo's pictures faded from her sight.

. . . . . .

When she looked again the scene was changed; but this time it was not a strange one, though Griselda had gazed at it for some moments before she recognized it. It was the great saloon, but it looked very different from what she had ever seen it. Forty years or so make a difference in rooms as well as in people!

The faded yellow damask hangings were rich and brilliant. There were bouquets of lovely flowers arranged about the tables; wax-lights were sending out their brightness in every direction, and the room was filled with ladies and gentlemen in gay attire.

Among them, after a time, Griselda remarked two ladies, no longer very young, but still handsome and stately, and something whispered to her

that they were her two aunts, Miss Grizzel and Miss Tabitha.

"Poor aunts!" she said softly to herself; "how old they have grown since then."

But she did not long look at them; her attention was attracted by a much younger lady—a mere girl she seemed, but oh, so sweet and pretty! She was dancing with a gentleman whose eyes looked as if they saw no one else, and she herself seemed brimming over with youth and happiness. Her very steps had joy in them.

"Well, Griselda," whispered a voice which she knew was the cuckoo's, "so you don't like to be told you are like your grandmother, eh?"

Griselda turned round sharply to look for the speaker, but he was not to be seen. And when she turned again, the picture of the great saloon had faded away.

. . . . . .

One more picture.

Griselda looked again. She saw before her a country road in full summer-time; the sun was shining, the birds were singing, the trees covered with their bright green leaves—everything appeared happy and joyful. But at last in the distance she saw, slowly approaching, a group of a few peo-

ple, all walking together, carrying in their center something long and narrow, which, though the black cloth covering it was almost hidden by the white flowers with which it was thickly strewn, Griselda knew to be a coffin.

It was a funeral procession; and in the place of chief mourner, with pale, set face, walked the same young man whom Griselda had last seen dancing with the girl Sybilla in the great saloon.

The sad group passed slowly out of sight; but as it disappeared there fell upon the ear the sounds of sweet music, lovelier far than she had heard before —lovelier than the magic cuckoo's most lovely songs—and somehow, in the music it seemed to the child's fancy there were mingled the soft strains of a woman's voice.

"It is Sybilla singing," thought Griselda dreamily, and with that she fell asleep again.

. . . . . .

When she woke she was in the arm-chair by the anteroom fire, everything around her looking just the same as usual, the cuckoo clock ticking away calmly and regularly. Had it been a dream only? Griselda could not make up her mind.

"But I don't see that it matters if it was," she said to herself. "If it was a dream, the cuckoo

sent it to me all the same, and I thank you very much indeed, cuckoo," she went on, looking up at the clock. "The last picture was rather sad, but still it was very nice to see it; and I thank you very much, and I'll never say again that I don't like to be told I'm like my dear pretty grandmother."

The cuckoo took no notice of what she said, but Griselda did not mind. She was getting used to his "ways."

"I expect he hears me quite well," she thought; "and even if he doesn't, it's only civil to try to thank him."

She sat still contentedly enough, thinking over what she had seen, and trying to make more "pictures" for herself in the fire. Then there came faintly to her ears the sound of carriage wheels, opening and shutting of doors, a little bustle of arrival.

"My aunts must have come back," thought Griselda; and so it was. In a few minutes Miss Grizzel, closely followed by Miss Tabitha, appeared at the anteroom door.

"Well, my love," said Miss Grizzel anxiously, "and how are you? Has the time seemed very long while we were away?"

"Oh, no, thank you, Aunt Grizzel," replied Griselda, "not at all. I've been quite happy, and my

cold's ever so much better, and my headache's quite gone."

"Come, that is good news," said Miss Grizzel. "Not that I'm exactly surprised," she continued, turning to Miss Tabitha, "for there really is nothing like tansy tea for a feverish cold."

"Nothing," agreed Miss Tabitha; "there really is nothing like it."

"Aunt Grizzel," said Griselda, after a few moments' silence, "was my grandmother quite young when she died?"

"Yes, my love, very young," replied Miss Grizzel, with a change in her voice.

"And was her husband very sorry?" pursued Griselda.

"Heart-broken," said Miss Grizzel. "He did not live long after; and then you know, my dear, your father was sent to us to take care of. And now he has sent you—the third generation of young creatures confided to our care."

"Yes," said Griselda. "My grandmother died in the summer when all the flowers were out; and she was buried in a pretty country place, wasn't she?"

"And when she was a little girl she lived with her grandfather, the old Dutch mechanic," continued Griselda. unconsciously using the very words she

had heard in her vision. "He was a nice old man; and how clever of him to have made the cuckoo clock, and such lots of other pretty, wonderful things. I don't wonder little Sybilla loved him; he was so good to her. But, oh, Aunt Grizzle, how pretty she was when she was a young lady! That time that she danced with my grandfather in the great saloon. And how very nice you and Aunt Tabitha looked then, too."

Miss Grizzel held her very breath in astonishment; and no doubt if Miss Tabitha had known she was doing so, she would have held hers too. But Griselda lay still, gazing at the fire, quite unconscious of her aunt's surprise.

"Your papa told you all these old stories, I suppose, my dear," said Miss Grizzel at last.

"Oh, no," said Griselda dreamily. "Papa never told me anything like that. Dorcas told me a very little, I think; at least, she made me want to know, and I asked the cuckoo, and then, you see, he showed me it all, It was so pretty."

Miss Grizzel glanced at her sister.

"Tabitha, my dear," she said in a low voice, "do you hear?"

And Miss Tabitha, who really was not very deaf when she set herself to hear, nodded in awe struck silence.

"Tabitha," continued Miss Grizzel in the same tone, "it is wonderful! Ah, yes; how true it is, Tabitha, that 'there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy'" (for Miss Grizzel was a well-read old lady, you see); "and from the very first, Tabitha, we always had a feeling that the child was strangely like Sybilla."

"Strangely like Sybilla," echoed Miss Tabitha.

"May she grow up as good, if not quite as beautiful—that we could scarcely expect; and may she be longer spared to those that love her," added Miss Grizzel, bending over Griselda, while two or three tears slowly trickled down her aged cheeks. "See, Tabitha, the dear child is fast asleep. How sweet she looks! I trust by to-morrow morning she will be quite herself again, her cold is so much better."

CHAPTER VI.

RUBBED THE WRONG WAY.

"For now and then there comes a day
When everything goes wrong."

GRISELDA'S cold was much better by "to-morrow morning." In fact, I might almost say it was quite well.

But Griselda herself did not feel quite well, and saying this reminds me that it is hardly sense to speak of a cold being better or well—for a cold's being "well" means that it is not there at all, out of existence, in short; and if a thing is out of existence, how can we say anything about it? Children, I feel quite in a hobble—I cannot get my mind straight about it—please think it over and give me your opinion. In the meantime, I will go an about Griselda.

She felt just a little ill—a sort of feeling that sometimes is rather nice, sometimes "very extremely" much the reverse! She felt in the humor of

being petted, and having beef-tea, and jelly, and sponge cake with her tea, and for a day or two this was all very well. She was petted, and she had lots of beef-tea, and jelly, and grapes, and sponge cakes, and everything nice; for her aunts, as you must have seen by this time, were really very, very kind to her in every way in which they understood how to be so.

But after a few days of the continued petting, and the beef-tea and the jelly and all the rest of it, it occurred to Miss Grizzel, who had a good large bump of "common sense," that it might be possible to overdo this sort of thing.

"Tabitha," she said to her sister, when they were sitting together in the evening, after Griselda had gone to bed, "Tabitha, my dear, I think the child is quite well again now. It seems to me it would be well to send a note to good Mr. Kneebreeches, to say that she will be able to resume her studies the day after to-morrow."

"The day after to-morrow," repeated Miss Tabitha. "The day after to-morrow—to say that she will be able to resume her studies the day after to-morrow—oh, yes, certainly. It would be very well to send a note to good Mr. Kneebreeches, my dear Grizzel."

"I thought you would agree with me," said Miss

Grizzel, with a sigh of relief (as if poor Miss Tabitha, during all the last half-century, had ever ventured to do anything else), getting up to fetch her writing materials as she spoke. "It is such a satisfaction to consult together about what we do. I was only a little afraid of being hard upon the child; but as you agree with me, I have no longer any misgiving."

"Any misgiving? Oh, dear no!" said Miss Tabitha. "You have no reason for any misgiving, I am sure, my dear Grizzel."

So the note was written and dispatched; and the next morning when, about twelve o'clock, Griselda made her appearance in the little drawing-room where her aunts usually sat, looking, it must be confessed, very plump and rosy for an invalid, Miss Grizzel broached the subject.

"I have written to request Mr. Kneebreches to resume his instructions to-morrow," she said quietly. "I think you are quite well again now, so Dorcas must wake you at your usual hour."

Griselda had been settling herself comfortably on a corner of the sofa. She had got a nice book to read, which her father, hearing of her illness, had sent her by post, and she was looking forward to the tempting plateful of jelly which Dorcas had brought her for luncheon every day since she had

been ill. Altogether, she was feeling very "lazy-easy" and contented. Her aunt's announcement felt like a sudden downpour of cold water or rush of east wind. She sat straight up in her sofa and exclaimed in a tone of great annoyance:

"Oh, Aunt Grizzel!"

"Well, my dear?" said Miss Grizzel placidly.

"I wish you wouldn't make me begin lessons just yet. I know they'll make my head ache again, and Mr. Kneebreeches will be so cross. I know he will, and he is so horrid when he is cross."

"Hush!" said Miss Grizzel, holding up her hand in a way that reminded Griselda of the cuckoo's "obeying orders." Just then, too, in the distance the anteroom clock struck twelve. "Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo!" on it went. Griselda could have stamped with irritation; but somehow, in spite of herself, she felt compelled to say nothing. She muttered some not very pretty words, coiled herself round on the sofa, opened her book and began to read.

But it was not as interesting as she had expected. She had not read many pages before she began to yawn, and she was delighted to be interrupted by Dorcas and the jelly.

But the jelly was not as nice as she had expected either. She tasted it and thought it was too sweet

and when she tasted it again, it seemed too strong of cinnamon; and the third taste seemed too strong of everything. She laid down her spoon and looked about her discontentedly.

"What is the matter, my dear?" said Miss Grizzel. "Is the jelly not to your liking?"

"I don't know," said Griselda shortly. She ate a few spoonfuls, and then took up her book again. Miss Grizzel said nothing more, but to herself she thought that Mr. Kneebreeches had not been recalled any too soon.

All day long it was much the same. Nothing seemed to come right to Griselda. It was a dull, cold day, what is called "a black frost;" not a bright, clear, pretty cold day, but the sort of frost that really makes the world seem dead—makes it almost impossible to believe that there will ever be warmth and sound and "growing-ness" again.

Late in the afternoon Griselda crept up to the anteroom and sat down by the window. Outside it was nearly dark, and inside it was not much more cheerful—for the fire was nearly out, and no lamps were lighted; only the cuckoo clock went on tick-ticking briskly as usual.

"I hate winter," said Griselda, pressing her cold little face against the colder window-pane. "I hate winter, and I hate lessons, I would give up

being a person in a minute if I might be a—a—what would I best like to be? Oh, yes, I know—a butterfly. Butterflies never see winter, and they certainly never have any lessons or any kind of work to do. I hate must-ing to do anything."

"Cuckoo," rang out suddenly above her head.

It was only four o'clock striking; and as soon as he had told it the cuckoo was back behind his doors again in an instant, just as usual. There was nothing for Griselda to feel offended at, but somehow she got quite angry.

"I don't care what you think, cuckoo!" she exclaimed defiantly. "I know you came out on purpose just now, but I don't care. I do hate winter, and I do hate lessons, and I do think it would be nicer to be a butterfly than a little girl."

In her secret heart I fancy she was half in hopes that the cuckoo would come out again and talk things over with her. Even if he were to scold her, she felt that it would be better than sitting there alone with nobody to speak to, which was very dull work indeed. At the bottom of her conscience there lurked the knowledge that what she should be doing was to be looking over her last lessons with Mr. Kneebreeches and refreshing her memory for the next day; but, alas! knowing one's duty is by no means the same thing as doing it, and Gri-

selda sat on by the window doing nothing but grumble and work herself up into a belief that she was one of the most-to-be pitied little girls in all the world. So that by the time Dorcas came to call her to tea, I doubt if she had a single pleasant thought of feeling left in her heart.

Things grew no better after tea, and before long Griselda asked if she might go to bed. She was "so tired," she said; and she certainly looked so, for ill-humor and idleness are excellent "tirers," and will soon take the roses out of a child's cheeks and the brightness out of her eyes. She held up her face to be kissed by her aunts in a meekly reproachful way, which made the old ladies feel quite uncomfortable.

"I am by no means sure that I have done right in recalling Mr. Kneebreeches so soon, Sister Tabitha," remarked Miss Grizzel uneasily when Griselda had left the room. But Miss Tabitha was busy counting her stitches, and did not give full attention to Miss Grizzel's observation, so she just repeated placidly, "Oh, yes, Sister Grizzel, you may be sure you have done right in recalling Mr. Kneebreeches."

"I am glad you think so," said Miss Grizzel, with again a little sigh of relief. "I was only distressed to see the child looking so white and tired."

Upstairs Griselda was hurry-scurrying into bed. There was a lovely fire in her room—fancy that! Was she not a poor neglected little creature? But even this did not please her. She was too cross to be pleased with anything; too cross to wash her face and hands, or let Dorcas brush her hair out nicely as usual; too cross, alas! to say her prayers! She just huddled into bed, huddling up her mind in an untidy hurry and confusion, just as she left her clothes in an untidy heap on the floor. She would not look into herself was the truth of it; she shrank from doing so because she knew things had been going on in that silly little heart of hers in a most unsatisfactory way all day, and she wanted to go to sleep and forget all about it.

She did go to sleep, very quieky too. No doubt she really was tired: tired with crossness and doing nothing, and she slept very soundly. When she woke up she felt so refreshed and rested that she fancied it must be morning. It was dark of course; but that was to be expected in mid-winter, especially as the shutters were closed.

"I wonder," thought Griselda; "I wonder if it really is morning. I should like to get up early—I went so early to bed. I think I'll just jump out of bed and open a chink of the shutters. I'll see at once if it's nearly morning, by the look of the sky."

She was up in a minute, feeling her way across the room to the window; and without much difficulty she found the hook of the shutters, unfastened it, and threw one side open. Ah, no, there was no sign of morning to be seen. There was moonlight, but nothing else, and not very much of that; for the clouds were hurrying across the "orbed maiden's" face at such a rate, one after the other, that the light was more like a number of pale flashes than the steady, cold shining of most frosty moonlight nights. There was going to be a change of weather, and the cloud armies were collecting together from all quarters; that was the real explanation of the hurrying and scurrying Griselda saw overhead, but this, of course, she did not understand. She only saw that it looked wild and stormy; and she shivered a little, partly with cold, partly with a half-frightened feeling that she could not have explained.

"I had better go back to bed," she said to herself; "but I am not a bit sleepy."

She was just drawing to the shutter again, when something caught her eye, and she stopped short in surprise. A little bird outside on the window-sill—a tiny bird crouching in close to the cold glass. Griselda's kind heart was touched in an instant. Cold as she was, she pushed back the shutter again,

and drawing a chair forward to the window managed to unfasten it—it was not a very heavy one—and to open it wide enough to slip her hand gently along to the bird- It did not start or move.

"Can it be dead?" thought Griselda anxiously.

But no, it was not dead. It let her put her hand round it and draw it in; and to her delight she felt that it was warm, and it even gave a gentle peck on her thumb.

"Poor little bird, how cold you must be!" she said kindly. But, to her amazement, no sooner was the bird safely inside the room, than it managed cleverly to escape from her hand. It fluttered quietly up on to her shoulder and sang out in a soft but cheery tone, "Cuckoo, cuckoo—cold, did you say, Griselda? Not so very, thank you."

Griselda stepped back from the window.

"It's you, is it?" she said rather surlily, her tone seeming to infer that she had taken a great deal of trouble for nothing.

"Of course it is, and why shouldn't it be? You're not generally so sorry to see me. What's the matter?"

"Nothing's the matter," replied Griselda, feeling a little ashamed of her want of civility; only, you see, If I had know it was you—" he hesitated.

"You wouldn't have clambered up and hurt your

poor fingers in opening the window if you had known it was me—is that it, eh?" said the cuckoo.

Somehow, when the cuckoo said "eh?" like that, Griselda was obliged to tell just what she was thinking.

"No I wouldn't have needed to open the window," she said. "You can get in or out whenever you like; you're not like a real bird. Of course, you were just tricking me, sitting out there pretending to be a starved robin"

There was a little indignation in her voice, and she gave her head a toss which nearly upset the cuckoo.

"Dear me! dear me!" exclaimed the cuckoo. "You have a great deal to complain of, Griselda. Your time and strength must be very valuable for you to regret so much having wasted a little of them on me."

Griselda felt her face grow red. What did he mean? Did he know how yesterday had been spent? She said nothing, but drooped her head, and one or two tears came slowly creeping up to her eyes.

"Child!" said the cuckoo, suddenly changing his tone, "you are very foolish. Is a kind thought or actionever wasted? Can your eyes see what such good seeds grow into? They have wings, Griselda —kindnesses have wings and roots, remember that

—wings that never droop and roots that never die. What do you think that I came and sat outside your window for?"

"Cuckoo," said Griselda humbly, "I am very sorry."

"Very well," said the cuckoo, "we'll leave it for the present. I have something else to see about. Are you cold, Griselda?"

"Very," she replied. "I would very much like to go back to bed, cuckoo, if you please; and there's plenty of room for you too, if you'd like to come in and get warm."

"There are other ways of getting warm besides going to bed," said the cuckoo. "A nice brisk walk, for instance. I was going to ask you to come out in the garden with me."

Griselda almost screamed.

"Out into the garden! Oh, cuckoo!" she exclaimed, "how can you think of such a thing? Such a freezing cold night. Oh, no, indeed, cuckoo, I couldn't possibly."

"Very well, Griselda," said the cuckoo; "if you haven't yet learned to trust me, there's no more to be said. Good-night.

He flapped his wings, cried out "Cuckoo" once only, flew across the room, and almost before Griselda understood what he was doing, had disappeared.

She hurried after him, stumbling against the furniture in her haste and by the uncertain light, The door was not open, but the cuckoo had got through it—"by the keyhole, I dare say," thought Griselda; "he can 'scrooge' himself up any way" —for a faint cuckoo was to be heard on the other side. In a moment Griselda had opened it, and was speeding down the long passage in the dark, guided only by the voice from time to time heard before her, "Cuckoo, cuckoo."

She forgot all about the cold, or rather she did not feel it, though the floor was of uncarpeted old oak, whose hard, polished surface would have usually felt like ice to a child's soft bare feet. It was a very long passage, and to-night, somehow, it seemed longer than ever. In fact, Griselda could have fancied she had been running along it for a mile or so, when at last she was brought to a standstill by finding she could go no further. Where was she? She could not imagine! It must be a part of the house she had never explored in the daytime, she decided. In front of her was a little stair running downward and ending in a doorway. All this Griselda could see by a bright light that streamed in by a key-hole and through the chinks round the door—a light so brilliant that she blinked her eyes and for a moment felt quite dazzled and confused.

"It came so suddenly," she said to herself; "some one must have lighted a lamp in there all at once. But it can't be a lamp; it's too bright for a lamp. It's more like a sun; but how ever could the sun be shining in a room in the middle of the night? What shall I do? Shall I open the door and peep in?"

"Cuckoo, cuckoo," came the answer, soft, but clear, from the other side.

"Can it be a trick of the cuckoo's to get me out into the garden?" thought Griselda; and for the first time since she had run out of the room a shiver of cold made her teeth chatter and her skin feel creepy.

"Cuckoo, cuckoo," sounded again, nearer this time, it seemed to Griselda.

"He's waiting for me. I will trust him," she said resolutely. "He has always been good and kind, and it's horrid of me to think he's going to trick me."

She ran down the little stair, she seized the handle of the door. It turned easily; the door opened —opened, and closed again noiselessly behind her, and what do you think she saw?

"Shut your eyes for a minute, Griselda," said the cuckoo's voice beside her; "the light will dazzle you at first. Shut them, and I will brush them with a little daisy dew, to strenghten them."

Griselda did as she was told. She felt the tip of the cuckoo's softest feather pass gently two or three times over her eyelids, and a delicious scent seemed to float before her.

"I didn't know daisies had any scent," she remarked.

"Perhaps you didn't. You forget, Griselda, that you have a great——"

"Oh, please don't, cuckoo. Please, please don't dear cuckoo," she exclaimed, dancing about with her hands clasped in entreaty, but her eyes still firmly closed. "Don't say that, and I'll promise to believe whatever you tell me. And how soon may I open my eyes, please cuckoo?"

"Turn round slowly three times. That will give the dew time to take effect," said the cuckoo. "Here goes—one—two—three. There, now."

Griselda opened her eyes.

CHAPTER VII.

BUTTERFLY-LAND.

"I'd be a butterfly."

GRISELDA opened her eyes.

What did she see.

The loveliest, loveliest garden that ever or never a little girl's eyes saw. As for describing it, I cannot. I must leave a good deal to your fancy. It was just a delicious garden. There was a charming mixture of all that was needed to make a garden perfect—grass, velvety lawn rather; water, for a little brook ran tinkling in and out, playing bo-peep among the bushes; trees, of course, and flowers, of course, flowers of every shade and shape. But all these beautiful things Griselda did not at first give as much attention to as they deserved; her eyes were so occupied with a quite unusual sight that met them.

This was butterflies! Not that butterflies are so

very uncommon; but butterflies, as Griselda saw them, I am quite sure, children, none of you ever saw, or are likely to see. There were such enormous numbers of them, and the variety of their colors and sizes were so great. They were fluttering about everywhere; the garden seemed actually alive with them.

Griselda stood for a moment in silent delight, feasting her eyes on the lovely things before her, enjoying the delicious sunshine which kissed her poor bare little feet, and seemed to wrap her all up in its warm embrace. Then she turned to her little friend.

"Cuckoo," she said, "I thank you so much. This is fairy-land at last!"

The cuckoo smiled, I was going to say; but that would be a figure of speech only, would it not? He shook his head gently.

"No, Griselda," he said kindly; "this is only butterfly-land."

"Butterfly-land!" repeated Griselda, with a little disappointment in her tone.

"Well," said the cuckoo, "it's where you were wishing to be yesterday, isn't it?"

Griselda did not particularly like these allusions to "yesterday." She thought it would be as well to change the subject.

"It's a beautiful place, whatever it is," she said; "and I'm sure, cuckoo, I'm very much obliged to you for bringing me here. Now may I run about and look at everything? How delicious it is to feel the warm sunshine again! I didn't know how cold I was. Look, cuckoo, my toes and fingers are quite blue; they're only just beginning to come right again. I suppose the sun always shines here. How nice it must be to be a butterfly; don't you think so, cuckoo? Nothing to do but fly about."

She stopped at last, quite out of breath.

"Griselda," said the cuckoo, "if you want me to answer your questions, you must ask them one at a time. You may run about and look at everything if you like, but you had better not be in such a hurry. You will make a great many mistakes if you are—you have made some already."

"How?" said Griselda.

"Have the butterflies nothing to do but fly about? Watch them."

Griselda watched.

"They do seem to be doing something," she said at last, "but I can't think what. They seem to be nibbling at the flowers, and then flying away something like bees gathering honey. Butterflies don't gather honey, cuckoo?"

"No," said the cuckoo. "They are filling their paint-boxes."

"What do you mean?" said Griselda.

"Come and see," said the cuckoo.

He flew quietly along in front of her, leading the way through the prettiest paths in all the pretty garden. The paths were arranged in different colors, as it were; that is to say, the flowers growing along their sides were not all "mixty-maxty," but one shade after another in regular order—from the palest blush pink to the very deepest damask crimson; then, again, from the soft greenish-blue of the small grass forget-me-not, to the rich warm tinge of the brilliant cornflower. Every tint was there; shades to which, though not exactly strange to her, Griselda could yet have given no name, for the daisy dew, you see, had sharpened her eyes to observe delicate variations of color as she had never done before.

"How beautiful the flowers are planned," she said to the cuckoo. "Is it just to look pretty, or why?"

"It saves time," replied the cuckoo. "The fetch-and-carry butterflies know exactly where to go for the tint the world-flower painters want."

"Who are the fetch-and-carry butterflies, and who are the world-flower painters?" asked Griselda.

"Wait a bit and you'll see, and use your eyes,"

answered the cuckoo. It'll do your tongue no harm to have a rest now and then."

Griselda thought it as well to take his advice, though not particularly relishing the manner in which it was given. She did use her eyes; and as she and the cuckoo made their way along the flower alleys, she saw that the butterflies were never idle. They came regularly, in little parties of twos and threes, and nibbled away, as she called it, at the flowers of the same color but different shades, till they had got what they wanted. Then off flew butterfly No. 1 with perhaps the palest tint of maize, or yellow, or lavender, whichever he was in quest of, followed by No. 2 with the next deeper shade of the same, and No. 3 bringing up in the rear.

Griselda gave a little sigh.

"What's the matter?" said the cuckoo.

"They work very hard," she replied in a melancholy tone.

"It's a busy time of the year," observed the cuckoo dryly.

After awhile they came to what seemed to be a sort of center to the garden. It was a huge glass house, with numberless doors, in and out of which butterflies were incessantly flying—reminding Griselda again of bees and a bee-hive. But she made no remark till the cuckoo spoke again.

"Come in," he said.

Griselda had to stoop a great deal, but she did manage to get in without knocking her head or doing any damage. Inside was just a mass of butterflies. A confused mass it seemed at first, but after awhile she saw that it was the very reverse of confused. The butterflies were all settled in rows on long, narrow white tables, and before each was a tiny object about the size of a flattened-out pin's head, which he was most carefully painting with one of his tentacles, which, from time to time, he moistened by rubbing it on the head of a butterfly waiting patiently behind him. Behind this butterfly again stood another, who after awhile took his place, while the first attendant flew away.

"To fill his paint-box again," remarked the cuckoo, who seemed to read Griselda's thoughts.

"But what are they painting, cuckoo?" she inquired eagerly.

"All the flowers in the world," replied the cuckoo. "Autumn, winter, and spring, they're hard at work. It's only just for the three months of summer that the butterflies have any holiday, and then a few stray ones now and then wander up to the world, and people talk about 'idle butterflies!' And even then it isn't true that they are idle. They go up to take a look at the flowers, to see how their

work has turned out, and many a damaged petal they repair, or touch up a faded tint, though no one ever knows it."

"I know it now," said Griselda. "I will never talk about idle butterflies again—never. But, cuckoo, do they paint all the flowers here too? What a fearful lot they must have to do!"

"No," said the cuckoo; "the flowers down here are fairy flowers. They never fade or die; they are always just as you see them. But the colors of your flowers are all taken from them, as you have seen. Of course they don't look the same up there," he went on, with a slight contemptuons shrug of his cuckoo shoulders; "the coarse air and the ugly things about must take the bloom off. The wild flowers do the best, to my thinking; people don't meddle with them in their stupid, clumsy way."

"But how do they get the flowers sent up to the world, cuckoo?" asked Griselda.

"They're packed up, of course, and taken up at night when all of you are asleep," said the cuckoo. "They're painted on elastic stuff, you see, which fits itself as the plant grows. Why, if your eyes were as they are usually, Griselda, you couldn't even see the petals the butterflies are painting now."

"And the packing up," said Griselda; "do the butterflies do that too?"

"No," said the cuckoo, "the fairies look after that."

"How wonderful!" exclaimed Griselda. But before the cuckoo had time to say more a sudden tumult filled the air. It was butterfly dinner-time!

"Are you hungry, Griselda?" said the cuckoo.

"Not so very," replied Griselda.

"It's just as well perhaps that you're not," he remarked, "for I don't know that you'd be much the better for dinner here."

"Why, not?" inquired Griselda curiously. "What do they have for dinner? Honey? I like that very well, spread on the top of bread-and-butter, of course—I don't think I should care to eat it alone."

"Yon won't get any honey," the cuckoo was beginning; but he was interrupted. Two handsome butterflies flew into the great glass hall, and making straight for the cuckoo, alighted on his shoulders. They fluttered about him for a minute or two, evidently rather excited about something, then flew away again, as suddenly as they had appeared.

"Those were royal messengers," said the cuckoo, turning to Griselda. "They have come with a message from the king and queen to invite us to a banquet which is te be held in honor of your visit."

"What fun!" cried Griselda. "Do let's go at once, cuckoo. But, oh, dear me," she went on, with a melancholy change of tone, "I was forgetting, cuckoo. I can't go to the banquet. I have nothing on but my night-gown. I never thought of it before, for I'm not a bit cold."

"Never mind," said the cuckoo, "I'll soon have that put to rights."

He flew off, and was back almost immediately, followed by a whole flock of butterflies. They were of a smaller kind than Griselda had hitherto seen, and they were of two colors only; half were blue, half yellow. They flew up to Griselda, who felt for a moment as if she were really going to be suffocated by them, but only for a moment. There seemed a great buzz and flutter about her, and then the butterflies set to work to dress her. And how do you think they dressed her? With themselves! They arranged themselves all over her in the cleverest way. One set of blue ones clustered round the hem of her little white night-gown, making a thick "ruche," as it were; and then there came two or three thinner rows of yellow, and then blue again. Round her waist they made the loveliest belt of mingled blue and yellow, and all over the upper part of her night-gown, in and out among the pretty white frills which Dorcas herself "gof-

fered" so nicely, they made themselves into fantastic trimmings of every shape and kind; bows, rosettes —I cannot tell you what they did not imitate.

Perhaps the prettiest ornament of all was the coronet or wreath they made of themselves for her head, dotting over her curly brown hair too with butterly spangles, which quivered like dew-drops as she moved about. No one would have known Griselda; she looked like a fairy queen, or princess at least; for even her white feet had what looked like butter-fly shoes upon them, though these, you will understand, were only a sort of make-believe, as, of course, the shoes were soleless.

"Now," said the cuckoo, when at last all was quiet again, and every yellow butter-fly seemed settled in his place, "now, Griselda, come look at yourself."

He led the way to a marble basin, into which fell the waters of one of the tinkling brooks that were to be found everywhere about the garden, and bade Griselda look into the water-mirror. It danced about rather; but still she was quite able to see herself. She peered in with great satisfaction, turning herself round so as to see first over one shoulder, then over the other.

"It is lovely," she said at last. "But, cuckoo, I'm just thinking—how shall I possibly be able to sit down without crushing ever so many?"

"Bless you, you needn't trouble about that," said the cuckoo; the butterflies are quite able to take care of themselves. You don't suppose you are the first little girl they have ever made a dress for?"

Griselda said no more, but followed the cuckoo, walking rather "gingerly," notwithstanding his assurances that the butterflies could take care of themselves. At last the cuckoo stopped in front of a sort of banked-up terrace, in the center of which grew a strange looking plant with large, smooth, spreading-out leaves, and on the two topmost leaves, their splendid wings glittering in the sunshine, sat two magnificent butterflies. They were many times larger than any Griselda had yet seen; in fact, the cuckoo himself looked rather small beside them, and they were so beautiful that Griselda felt quite overawed. You could not have said what color they were, for at the faintest movement they seemed to change into new colors, each more exquisite than the last. Perhaps I could best give you an idea of them by saying that they were like living rainbows.

"Are those the king and queen?" asked Griselda in a whisper.

"Yes," said the cuckoo. "Do you admire them?"

"I should rather think I did," said Griselda. "But, cuckoo, do they never do anything but lie there in the sunshine?"

"Oh, you silly girl," exclaimed the cuckoo, "always jumping at conclusions. No, indeed, that is not how they manage things in butterfly-land. The king and queen have worked harder than any other butterflies. They are chosen every now and then, out of all the others, as being the most industrious and the cleverest of all the world-flower painters; and then they are allowed to rest, and are fed on the finest essences, so that they grow as splendid as you see. But even now they are not idle; they superintend all the work that is done, and choose all the new colors."

"Dear me!" said Griselda, under her breath, "how clever they must be."

Just then the butterfly king and queen stretched out their magnificent wings, and rose upward, soaring proudly into the air.

"Are they going away?" said Griselda in a disappointed tone.

"Oh, no," said the cuckoo; "they are welcoming you. Hold out your hands."

Griselda held out her hands, and stood gazing up into the sky. In a minute or two the royal butterflies appeared again, slowly, majestically circling

downward, till at length they alighted on Griselda's little hands, the king on the right, the queen on the left, almost covering her fingers with their great dazzling wings.

"You do look nice now," said the cuckoo, hopping back a few steps and looking up at Griselda approvingly; "but it's time for the feast to begin, as it won't do for us to be late."

The king and queen appeared to understand. They floated away from Griselda's hands, and settled themselves, this time, at one end of a beautiful little grass plot or lawn, just below the terrace where grew the large-leaved plant. This was evidently their dining-room; for no sooner were they in their place than butterflies of every kind and color came pouring in, in masses, from all directions. Butterflies small and butterflies large; butterflies light and butterfles dark; butterflies blue, pink, crimson, green, gold color—every color, and far, far more colors than you could possibly imagine.

They all settled down, round the sides of the grassy dining-table, and in another minute a number of small white butterflies appeared, carrying among them flower petals carefully rolled up, each containing a drop of liquid. One of these was presented to the king, and then one to the queen, who

each sniffed at their petal for an instant, and then passed it on to the butterfly next them, whereupon fresh petals were handed to them, which they again passed on.

"What are they doing, cuckoo?" said Griselda; "that's not eating."

"It's their kind of eating," he replied. "They don't require any other kind of food than a sniff of perfume; and as there are perfumes extracted from every flower in butterfly-land, and there are far more flowers than you could count between now and Christmas, you must allow there is plenty of variety of dishes."

"Um-m," said Griselda; "I suppose there is. But all the same, cuckoo, it's a very good thing I'm not hungry, isn't it? May I pour the scent on my pocket handkerchief when it comes round to me? I have my handkerchief here, you see. Isn't it nice that I brought it? It was under my pillow, and I wrapped it round my hand to open the shutter, for the hook scratched it once."

"You may pour one drop on your handkerchief," said the cuckoo, "but not more. I shouldn't like the butterflies to think you greedy."

But Griselda grew very tired of the scent feast long before all the petals had been passed round. The perfumes were very nice, certainly, but there

were such quantities of them—double quantities in honor of the guest, of course! Griselda screwed up her handkerchief into a tight little ball, so that the one drop of scent should not escape from it, and then she kept sniffing at it impatiently, till at last the cuckoo asked her what was the matter.

"I am so tired of the feast," she said. "Do let us do something else, cuckoo."

"It's getting rather late," said the cuckoo. "But see, Griselda, they are going to have an air-dance now."

"What's that?" said Griselda.

"Look and you'll see," he replied.

Flocks and flocks of butterflies were rising a short way into the air, and their arranging themselves in bands according to their colors.

"Come up on the bank," said the cuckoo to Griselda; "you'll see them better."

Griselda climbed up the bank, and as from there she could look down on the butterfly show, she saw it beautifully. The long strings of butterflies twisted in and out of each other in the most wonderful way, like ribbons of every hue plaiting themselves and then in an instant unplaiting themselves again. Then the king and queen placed themselves in the centre, and round and round in moving circles twisted and untwisted the brilliant bands of butterflies.

"It's like a kaleidoscope," said Griselda; "and now it's like those twisty-twirly dissolving views that papa took me to see once. It's just like them. Oh, how pretty! Cuckoo, are they doing all on purpose to please me?"

"A good deal," said the cuckoo. "Stand up and clap your hands loud three times, to show them you're pleased."

Griselda obeyed. "Clap" number one—all the butterflies rose up into the air in a cloud; clap nnmber two—they all fluttered and twirled and buzzed about, as if in the greatest excitement; clap number three—they all turned in Griselda's direction with a rush.

"They're going to kiss you, Griselda," cried the cuckoo.

Griselda felt her breath going. Up above her was the vast feathery crowd of butterflies, fluttering, rushing down upon her.

"Cuckoo, cuckoo," she screamed, "they'll suffocate me. Oh, cuckoo!"

"Shut your eyes, and clap yonr hands loud, very loud," called out the cuckoo.

And just as Griselda clapped her hands, holding her precious handkerchief between her teeth, she heard him give his usual cry, Cuckoo, cuckoo."

Clap—where were they all?

Griselda opened her eyes—garden, butterflies, cuckoo, all had disappeared. She was in bed, and Dorcas was knocking at the door with the hot water.

"Miss Grizzel said I was to wake you at your usual time this morning, missie," she said. "I hope you don't feel too tired to get up."

"Tired! I should think not," replied Griselda. "I was awake this morning ages before you, I can tell you, my dear Dorcas. Come here for a minute, Dorcas, please," she went on. "There now, sniff my handkerchief. What do you think of that?"

"It's beautiful," said Dorcas. "It's out of the big blue chinay bottle on your auntie's table, in'nt it, missie?"

"Stuff and nonsense," replied Griselda; "it's scent of my own, Dorcas. Aunt Grizzel never had any like it in her life. There now, please give me my slippers, I want to get up and look over my lessons for Mr. Kneebreeches before he comes. "Dear me," she added to herself as she was putting on her slippers, "how pretty my feet did look with the blue butterfly shoes! It was very good of the cuckoo to take me there; but I don't think I shall ever wish to be a butterfly again, now I know how hard they work! But I'd like to do my lessons well to-day. I fancy it'll please the dear old cuckoo."

CHAPTER VIII.

MASTER PHIL.

"Who comes from the world of flowers?
Daisy and crocus, and sea-blue bell,
And violet shrinking in dewy cell—
Sly cells that know the secrets of night,
When earth is bathed in fairy light—
Scarlet, and blue, and golden flowers."

And so Mr. Kneebreeches had no need to complain of his pupil that day.

And Miss Grizzel congratulated herself more heartily than ever on her wise management of children.

And Miss Tabitha repeated that Sister Grizzel might indeed congratulate herself.

And Griselda became gradually more and more convinced that the only way as yet discovered of getting through hard tasks is to set to work and do them; also that grumbling, as things are at present arranged in this world, does not always, nor I may say often, do good; furthermore, that an

ill-tempered child is not, on the whole, likely to be as much loved as a good-tempered one; lastly, that if you wait long enough, winter will go and spring will come.

For this was the case this year, after all! Spring had only been sleepy and lazy, and in such a case what could poor old winter do but fill the vacant post till she came? Why he should be so scolded and reviled for faithfully doing his best, as he often is, I really don't know. Not that all the ill words he gets have much effect on him—he comes again just as usual, whatever we say of or to him. I suppose his feelings have long ago been frozen up, or surely before this he would have taken offense—well for us that he has not done so!

But when the spring did come at last this year, it would be impossible for me to tell you how Griselda enjoyed it. It was like new life to her as well as to the plants, and flowers, and birds, and insects. Hitherto, you see, she had been able to see very little of the outside of her aunt's house; and charming as was the inside, the outside, I must say, was still "charminger." There seemed no end to the little up-and-down paths and alleys leading to rustic seats and quaint arbors; no limits to the little pine wood. down into which led the dearest little zig-zaggy path you ever saw, all bordered with snow-

drops and primroses and violets, and later on with periwinkles and wood anemones, and those bright, starry white flowers whose name no two people agree about.

This wood path was the place, I think, which Griselda loved best. The bowling green was certainly very delightful, and so was the terrace where the famous roses grew; but lovely as the roses were (I am speaking just now, of course, of later on in the summer, when they were all in bloom), Griselda could not enjoy them as much as the wild flowers, for she was forbidden to gather or touch them, except with her funny round nose!

"You may scent them, my dear," said Miss Grizzel, who was of opinion that smell was not a pretty word; "but I cannot allow anything more."

And Griselda did "scent" them, I assure you. She burrowed her whole rosy face in the big ones; but gently, for she did not want to spoil them, both for her aunt's sake and because, too, she had a greater regard for flowers now that she knew the secret of how they were painted, and what a great deal of trouble the butterflies take about them.

But after awhile one grows tired of "scenting" roses; and even the trying to walk straight across the bowling green with her eyes shut, from the ar, bor at one side to the arbor exactly like it at the

other, grew stupid, though no doubt it would have been capital fun with a companion to applaud or criticise.

So the wood path became Griselda's favorite haunt. As the summer grew on, she began to long more than ever for a companion—not so much for play, as for some one to play with. She had lessons, of course, just as many as in the winter; but with the long days there seemed to come a quite unaccountable increase of playtime, and Griselda sometimes found it hang heavy on her hands. She had not seen or heard anything of the cuckoo either, save, of course, in his "official capacity" of time-teller, for a very long time.

"I suppose," she thought, "he thinks I don't need amusing now that the fine days are come, and I can play in the garden; and certainly, if I had any one to play with, the garden would be perfectly lovely."

But failing companions, she did the best she could for herself, and this was why she loved the path down into the wood so much. There was a sort of mystery about it; it might have been the path leading to the cottage of Red Riding Hood's grandmother or a path leading to fairyland itself. There were all kinds of queer, nice, funny noises to be heard there—in one part of it especially, where Gri-

selda made herself a seat of some moss-grown stones, and where she came so often that she got to know all the little flowers growing close round about, and even the particular birds whose nests were hard by.

She used to sit there and fancy—fancy that she heard the wood-elves chattering under their breath, or the little underground gnomes and kobolds hammering at their fairy forges. And the tinkling of the brook in the distance sounded like the enchanted bells round the necks of the fairy kine, who are sent out to pasture sometimes on the upper world hillsides. For Griselda's head was crammed full, perfectly full, of fairy lore; and the mandarins' country and butterfly-land were quite as real to her as the every-day world about her.

But all this time she was not forgotten by the cuckoo, as you will see.

One day she was sitting in her favorite nest, feeling, notwithstanding the sunshine, and the flowers, and the soft, sweet air, and the pleasant sounds all about, rather dull and lonely. For though it was only May, it was really quite a hot day, and Griselda had been all the morning at her lessons, and had tried very hard and done them very well, and now she felt as if she deserved some reward. Suddenly in the distance she heard a very well-known sound, "Cuckoo, cuckoo."

"Can that be the cuckoo?" she said to herself; and in a moment she felt sure that it must be. For, for some reason that I do not know enough about the habits of real "flesh-and-blood" cuckoos to explain, that bird was not known in the neighborhood where Griselda's aunts lived. Some twenty miles or so further south it was heard regularly; but all this spring Griselda had never caught the sound of its familiar note, and now she remembered it never came to these parts.

So "It must be my cuckoo," she said to herself. "He must be coming out to speak to me. How funny! I have never seen him by daylight."

She listened. Yes, again there it was, "Cuckoo, cuckoo," as plain as possible and nearer than before.

"Cuckoo," cried Griselda, "do come and talk to me. It's such a long time since I have seen you, and I have nobody to play with."

But there was no answer. Griselda held her breath to listen; but there was nothing to be heard.

"Unkind cuckoo!" she exclaimed. "He is tricking me, I do believe; and to-day, too, just when I was so dull and lonely!"

The tears came into her eyes, and she was beginning to think herself very badly used, when sud-

denly a rustling in the bushes beside her made her turn round, more than half expecting to see the cuckoo himself. But it was not he. The rustling went on for a minute or two without anything making its appearance, for the bushes were pretty thick just there, and any one scrambling up from the pine wood below would have had rather hard work to get through, and indeed for a very big person such a feat would have been altogether impossible.

It was not a very big person, however, who was causing all the rustling and crunching of branches and general commotion which now absorbed Griselda's attention. She sat watching for another minute in perfect stillness, afraid of startling by the slightest movement the squirrel or rabbit or creature of some kind which she expected to see. At last—was that a squirrel or rabbit, that rosy, round face with shaggy, fair hair falling over the eager blue eyes, and a general look of breathlessness and over-heatedness and determination?

A squirrel or a rabbit! No, indeed, but a very sturdy, very merry, very ragged little boy.

"Where are that cuckoo? Does you know?" were the first words he uttered as soon as he had fairly shaken himself, though not by any means all his clothes, free of the bushes (for ever so

many pieces of jacket and knickerbockers, not to speak of one boot and half his hat, had been left behind on the way), and found breath to say something.

Griselda stared at him for a moment without speaking. She was so astonished. It was months since she had spoken to a child, almost since she had seen one, and about children younger than herself she knew very little at any time, being baby of the family at home, you see, and having only big brothers older than herself for playfellows.

"Who are you?" she said at last. "What's your name and what do you want?"

"My name's Master Phil, and I want that cuckoo," answered the little boy. "He camed up this way. I'm sure he did, for he called me all the way."

"He's not here," said Griselda, shaking her head; "and this is my aunts' garden. No one is allowed to come here but friends of theirs. You had better go home; and you have torn your clothes so."

"This aren't a garden," replied the little fellow undauntedly, looking round him; "this are a wood. There are blue-bells and primroses here, and that shows it aren't a garden—not anybody's garden, I mean, with walls round, for nobody to come in."

"But it is," said Griselda, getting rather vexed. "If it isn't a garden, it's grounds, private grounds, and nobody should come without leave. This path leads down to the wood, and there's a door in the wall at the bottom to get into the lane. You may go down that way, little boy. No one comes scrambling up the way you did."

"But I want to find the cuckoo," said the little boy. "I do so want to find the cuckoo."

His voice sounded almost as if he were going to cry, and his pretty, hot, flushed face puckered up. Griselda's heart smote her; she looked at him more carefully. He was such a very little boy, after all; she did not like to be cross to him.

"How old are you?" she asked.

"Five and a bit. I had a birthday after the summer; and if I'm good, nurse says perhaps I'll have one after next summer too. Do you ever have birthdays?" he went on, peering up at Griselda. "Nurse says she used to when she was young, but she never has any now."

"Have you a nurse?" asked Griselda, rather surprised; for, to tell the truth, from "Master Phil's" appearance, she had not felt at all sure what sort of little boy he was, or rather what sort of people he belonged to.

"Of course I have a nurse and a mother too,"

said the little boy, opening wide his eyes in surprise at the question. "Haven't you? Perhaps you're too big, though. People leave off having nurses and mothers when they're big, don't they? Just like birthdays. But I won't. I won't never leave off having a mother, anyway. I don't care so much about nurse and birthdays, not kite so much. Did you care when you had to leave off, when you got too big?"

"I hadn't to leave off because I got big," said Griselda sadly. "I left off when I was much littler than you;" she went on, unconsciously speaking as Phil would best understand her. "My mother died."

"I'm wery sorry," said Phil; and the way he said it quite overcame Griselda's unfriendliness.

"But perhaps you've a nice nurse. My nurse is rather nice; but she will 'cold me to-day, won't she?" he added, laughing, pointing to the terrible rents in his garments. "These are my very oldest-est things; that's a good thing, isn't it? Nurse says I don't look like Master Phil in these, but when I have on my blue welpet, then I look like Master Phil. I shall have my blue welpet when mother comes."

"Is your mother away?" said Griselda.

"Oh, yes, she's been away a long time; so nurse

came here to take care of me at the farm-house, you know. Mother was ill, but she's better now, and some day she'll come too."

"Do you like being at the farm-house? Have you anybody to play with?" said Griselda,

Phil shook his curly head. "I never have anybody to play with," he said. "I'd like to play with you if you're not too big. And do you think you could help me to find the cuckoo?" he added insinuatingly.

"What do you know about the cuckoo?" said Griselda.

"He called me," said Phil; "he called me lots of times; and to-day nurse was busy, so I thought I'd come. And do you know," he added mysteriously, "I do believe the cuckoo's a fairy, and when I find him I'm going to ask him to show me the way to fairyland."

"He says we must all find the way ourselves," said Griselda, quite forgetting to whom she was speaking.

"Does he?" cried Phil in great excitement. "Do you know him then, and have you asked him? Oh, do tell me!"

Griselda recollected herself. "You couldn't understand," she said. "Some day perhaps I'll tell you—I mean if ever I see you again."

"But I may see you again," said Phil, settling himself down comfortably beside Griselda on her mossy stone. "You'll let me come, won't you? I like to talk about fairies, and nurse doesn't understand. And if the cuckoo knows you, perhaps that's why he called me to come to play with you."

"How did he call you?" asked Griselda.

"First," said Phil gravely, "it was in the night. I was asleep, and I had been wishing I had somebody to play with, and then I d'eamed of the cuckoo—such a nice d'eam. And when I woke up I heard him calling me, and I wasn't d'eaming then. And then when I was in the field he called me, but I couldn't find him, and nurse said 'Nonsense.' And to-day he called me again, so I camed up through the bushes. And mayn't I come again? Perhaps if we both tried together we could find the way to fairyland. Do you think we could?"

"I don't know," said Griselda dreamily. "There's a great deal to learn first, the cuckoo says."

"Have you learned a great deal?" (he called it "a gate deal") asked Phil, looking up at Griselda with increased respect. "I don't know scarcely nothing. Mother was ill such a long time before she went away, but I know she wanted me to learn to read books. But nurse is too old to teach me.

"Shall I teach you?" said Griselda. "I can bring some of my old books and teach you here after I have done my own lessons."

"And then mother would be surprised when she comes back," said Master Phil, clapping his hands. "Oh, do! And when I've learned to read a great deal, do you think the cuckoo would show us the way to fairyland?

"I don't think it was that sort of learning he meant," said Griselda. "But I dare say that would help. I think," she went on, lowering her voice a little and looking down gravely into Phil's earnest eyes, "I think he means mostly learning to be very, very good, you know."

"Gooder than you?" said Phil.

"Oh, dear, yes; lots and lots gooder than me replied Griselda.

"I think you're very good," observed Phil, in a parenthesis. Then he went on with his cross-questioning.

"Gooder than mother?"

"I don't know your mother, so how can I tell how good she is?" said Griselda.

"I can tell you," said Phil importantly. "She is just as good as—as good as—as good as good. That's what she is."

"You mean she couldn't be better, said Griselda, smiling.

"Yes, that'll do, if you like. Would that be good enough for us to be, do you think?"

"We must ask the cuckoo," said Griselda. "But I'm sure it would be a good thing for you to learn to read. You must ask your nurse to let you come here every afternoon that it's fine, and I'll ask my aunt."

"I needn't ask nurse," said Phil composedly. "She'll never know where I am, and I needn't tell her. She doesn't care what I do, except tearing my clothes; and when she scolds me, I don't care."

"That isn't good, Phil," said Griselda gravely. "You'll never be as good as good if you speak like that."

"What should I say, then? Tell me," said the little boy submissively.

"You should ask nurse to let you come to play with me, and tell her I'm much bigger than you, and I won't let you tear your clothes. And you should tell her you're very sorry you've torn them to-day."

"Very well," said Phil; "I'll say that. But, oh, see!" he exclaimed, darting off, "there's a field-mouse! If only I could catch him!"

Of course he couldn't catch him, nor could Griselda either; very ready, though, she was to do her best. But it was great fun all the same, and

the children laughed heartily, and enjoyed themselves tremendously. And when they were tired they sat down again, and gathered flowers for nosegays; and Griselda was surprised to find how clever Phil was about it. He was much quicker than she at spying out the prettiest blossoms, however hidden behind tree, or stone, or shrub. And he told her of all the best places for flowers near by, and where grew the largest primroses and the sweetest violets, in a way that astonished her.

"You're such a little boy," she said; "how do you know so much about flowers?"

"I've had no one else to play with," he said innocently. "And then, you know, the fairies are so fond of them."

When Griselda thought it was time to go home, she led little Phil down the wood path and through the door in the wall opening on to the lane.

"Now you can find your way home without scrambling through any more bushes, can't you, Master Phil?" she said.

"Yes, thank you; and I'll come again to that place to-morrow afternoon—shall I?" asked Phil. "I'll know when—after I've had my dinner and raced three times round the big field, then it'll be time. That's how it was to-day."

"I should think it would do if you walked three

times—or twice if you like—round the field. It isn't a good thing to race just when you've had your dinner," observed Griselda sagely. "And you mustn't try to come if it isn't fine, for my aunts won't let me go out if it rains even the tiniest bit. And of course you must ask your nurse's leave."

"Very well," said little Phil as he trotted off. "I'll try to remember all those things. I'm so glad you'll play with me again; and if you see the cuckoo, please thank him."

CHAPTER IX.

UP AND DOWN THE CHIMNEY.

Helper. Well, but if it was all dream, it would be the same as it it was all real, would it not?

Keeper. Yes, I see. I mean, sir, I do *not* see.—*A. Liliput Revel.*

Not having "just had her dinner," and feeling very much inclined for her tea, Griselda ran home at a great rate.

She felt, too, in such a good spirits; it had been so delightful to have a companion in her play.

"What a good thing it was I didn't make Phil run away before I found out what a nice little boy he was," she said to herself. "I must look out my old reading-books to-night. I shall so like teaching him, poor little boy! and the cuckoo will be pleased at my doing something useful, I'm sure."

Tea was quite ready, in fact waiting for her, when she came in. This was a meal she always had by herself, brought up on a tray to Dorcas'

little sitting-room, where Dorcas waited upon her. And sometimes when Griselda was in a particularly good humor she would beg Dorcas to sit down and have a cup of tea with her—a liberty the old servant was far too dignified and respectful to have thought of taking, unless specially requested to do so.

This evening, as you know, Griselda was in a very particularly good humor and besides this, so very full of her adventures that she would have been glad of an even less sympathizing listener than Dorcas was likely to be.

"Sit down, Dorcas, and have some more tea, do, she said coaxingly. "It looks ever so much more comfortable, and I'm sure you could eat a little more if you tried, whether you've had your tea in the kitchen or not. I'm fearfully hungry, I can tell you. You'll have to cut a whole lot more bread-and-butter, and not 'ladies' slices' either."

"How your tongue does go to be sure, Miss Griselda," said Dorcas, smiling as she seated herself on the chair Griselda had drawn in for her.

"And why shouldn't it?" said Griselda saucily. "It doesn't do it any harm. But oh, Dorcas, I've had such fun this afternoon—really, you couldn't guess what I've been doing."

"Very likely not, missie," said Dorcas.

"But you might try to guess. Oh, no, I don't think you need—guessing takes such a time, and I want to tell you. Just fancy, Dorcas, I've been playing with a little boy in the wood."

"Playing with a little boy, Miss Griselda!" exclaimed Dorcas aghast.

"Yes; and he's coming again to-morrow and the day after, and every day, I dare say," said Griselda. "He is such a nice little boy."

"But, missie," began Dorcas.

"Well? What's the matter? You needn't look like that—as if I had done something naughty," said Griselda sharply.

"But you'll tell your aunt, missie?"

"Of course," said Griselda, looking up fearlessly into Dorcas' face with her bright gray eyes. "Of course; why shouldn't I? I must ask her to give the little boy leave to come into our grounds; and I told the little boy to be sure to tell his nurse, who takes care of him, about his playing with me."

"His nurse," repeated Dorcas, in a tone of some relief. "Then he must be quite a little boy; perhaps Miss Grizzel would not object so much in that case."

"Why should she object at all? She might know I wouldn't want to play with a naughty, rude boy," said Griselda.

"She thinks all boys rude and naughty, I'm afraid, missie," said Dorcas. "All. that is to say, excepting your dear papa. But then, of course, she had the bringing up of him in her own way from the beginning."

"Well, I'll ask her, anyway," said Griselda; "and if she says I'm not to play with him, I shall think —I know what I shall think of Aunt Grizzel, whether I say it or not.

And the old look of rebellion and discontent settled down again on her rosy face.

"Be careful, missie, now do, there's a dear good girl," said Dorcas anxiously, an hour later, when Griselda, dressed as usual in her little white muslin frock, was ready to join her aunts at dessert.

But Griselda would not condescend to make any reply.

"Aunt Grizzel," she said suddenly, when she had eaten an orange and three biscuits and drunk half a glass of home-made elderberry wine, "Aunt Grizzel, when I was out in the garden to-day—down the wood path, I mean—I met a little boy, and he played with me, and I want to know if he may come every day to play with me."

Griselda knew she was not making her request in a very amiable sort of a manner; she knew, indeed, that she was making it in such a way as was

almost certain to lead to its being refused; and yet, though she was really so very, very anxious to get leave to play with little Phil, she took a sort of spiteful pleasure in injuring her own cause.

How foolish ill-temper makes us! Griselda had allowed herself to get so angry at the thought of being thwarted that, had her aunt looked up quietly and said at once, "Oh, yes, you may have the little boy to play with you whenever you like," she would really, in a strange, distorted sort of way, have been disappointed.

But, of course, Miss Grizzel made no such reply. Nothing less than a mracle could have made her answer Griselda otherwise than as she did. Like Dorcas, for an instant she was utterly "flabbergasted," if you know what that means. For she was quite an old lady, you know; and, sensible as she was, things upset her much more easily than when she was younger.

Naugthy Griselda saw her uneasiness, and enjoyed it.

'Playing with a boy!" exclaimed Miss Grizzel. 'A boy in my grounds, and you, my niece, to have played with him!"

"Yes, said Griselda coolly, "and I want to play with him again."

"Griselda," said her aunt, "I am too astonished to say more at present. Go to bed."

"Why should I go to bed? It is not my bed-time," cried Griselda, blazing up. "What have I done to be sent to bed as if I were in disgrace?"

"Go to bed," repeated Miss Grizzel. "I will speak to you to-morrow."

"You are very unfair and unjust," said Griselda, starting up from her chair. "That's all the good of being honest and telling everything. I might have played with the little boy every day for a month, and you would never have known if I hadn't told you."

She banged across the room as she spoke, and out at the door, slamming it behind her rudely. Then upstairs like a whirlwind; but when she got to her own room, she sat down on the floor and burst into tears; and when Dorcas came up, nearly half an hour later, she was still in the same place, crouched up in a little heap, sobbing bitterly.

"Oh, missie, missie," said Dorcas, "it's just what I was afraid of!"

As Griselda rushed out of the room, Miss Grizzel leaned back in her chair and sighed deeply.

"Already," she said faintly. "She was never so violent before. Can one afternoon's companion-ship with rudeness have already contaminated her? Already, Tabitha—can it be so?"

"Already," said Miss Tabitha, softly shaking

her head, which somehow made her look wonderfully like an old cat; for she felt cold of an evening, and usually wore a very fine woolly shawl of a delicate gray shade, and the borders of her cap and the ruffles round her throat and wrists were all of fluffy, downy white—"already," she said.

"Yet," said Miss Grizzel, recovering herself a little, "it is true what the child said. She might have deceived us. Have I been hard upon her, Sister Tabitha?"

"Hard upon her! Sister Grizzel," said Miss Tabitha with more energy than usual; "no, certainly not. For once, Sister Grizzel, I disagree with you. Hard upon her! Certainly not."

But Miss Grizzel did not feel happy.

When she went up to her own room at night, she was surprised to find Dorcas waiting for her, instead of the younger maid.

"I thought you would not mind having me, instead of Martha, to-night, ma'am," she said, "for I did so want to speak to you about Miss Griselda. The poor, dear young lady has gone to bed so very unhappy."

"But do you know what she has done, Dorcas?" said Miss Grizzel. Admitted a boy, a rude, common, impertinent boy, into my precincts, and played with him—with a boy, Dorcas."

"Yes, ma'am," said Dorcas. "I know all about it ma'am. Miss Griselda has told me all. But if you would allow me to give an opinion, it isn't quite so bad. He's quite a little boy, ma'am—between five and six—only just about the age Miss Griselda's dear papa was when he first came to us, and, by all I can hear, quite a little gentleman."

"A little gentleman," repeated Miss Grizzel, "and not six years old! That is less objectionable than I expected. What is his name, as you know so much, Dorcas!"

"Master Phil," replied Dorcas. "That is what he told Miss Griselda, and she never thought to ask him more. But I'll tell you how we could get to hear more about him, I think, ma'am. From what Miss Griselda says, I believe he is staying at Mr. Crouch's farm, and that, you know ma'am, belongs to my Lady Lavender, though it is a good way from Merrybrow Hall. My lady is pretty sure to know about the child; for she knows all that goes on among her tenants, and I remember hearing that a little gentleman and his nurse had come to Mr. Crouch's to lodge for six months."

Miss Grizzel listened attentively.

"Thank you, Dorcas," she said, when the old servant had left off speaking. "You have behaved with your usual discretion. I shall drive over to

Merrybrow to-morrow, and make inquiry. And you may tell Miss Griselda in the morning what I purpose doing; but tell her also that, as a punishment for her rudeness and ill-temper, she must have breakfast in her own room to-morrow, and not see me till I send for her. Had she restrained her temper and explained the matter, all this distress might have been saved."

Dorcas did not wait till "to-morrow morning" she could not bear to think of Griselda's unhappiness. From her mistress' room she went straight to the little girl's, going in very softly, so as not to disturb her should she be sleeping.

"Are you awake, missie?" she said gently.

Griselda started up.

"Yes," she exclaimed. "Is it you, cuckoo? I'm quite awake."

"Bless the child," said Dorcas to herself, "how her head does run on Miss Sybilla's cuckoo. It's really wonderful. There's more in such things than some people think."

But aloud she only replied:

"It's Dorcas, missie. No fairy, only old Dorcas come to comfort you a bit. Listen, missie. Your auntie is going over to Merrybrow Hall to-morrow to inquire about this little Master Phil from my Lady Lavender, for we think it's at one of her

ladyship's farms that he and his nurse are staying; and if she hears that he's a nice-mannered little gentleman and comes of good parents—why missie, there's no saying but that you'll get leave to play with him as much as you like."

"But not to-morrow, Dorcas," said Griselda. "Aunt Grizzel never goes to Merrybrow till the afternoon. She wont be back in time for me to play with Phil to-morrow."

"No, but next day, perhaps," said Dorcas.

"Oh, but that won't do," said Griselda, beginning to cry again. "Poor little Phil will be coming up to the wood path to-morrow; and if he doesn't find me, he'll be so unhappy—perhaps he'll never come again if I don't meet him to-morrow."

Dorcas saw that the little girl was worn out and excited, and not yet inclined to take a reasonable view of things.

"Go to sleep, missie," she said kindly, "and don't think anything more about it till to-morrow. It will be all right, you'll see."

Her patience touched Griselda.

"You are very kind, Dorcas," she said. "I don't mean to be cross to you; but I can't bear to think of poor little Phil. Perhaps he'll sit down on my mossy stone and cry. Poor little Phil!"

But notwithstanding her distress, when Dorcas

had left her she did feel her heart a little lighter, and somehow or other before long she fell asleep.

When she awoke, it seemed to be suddenly, and she had the feeling that something had disturbed her. She lay for a minute or two perfectly still—listening. Yes; there it was—the soft, faint rustle in the air that she knew so well. It seemed as if something was moving away from her.

"Cuckoo," she said gently, "is that you?"

A moment's pause, then came the answer—the pretty greeting she expected.

"Cuckoo, cuckoo," soft and musical. Then the cuckoo spoke.

"Well, Griselda," he said, "and how are you? It's a good while since we have had any fun together."

"That's not my fault," said Griselda sharply. She was not yet feeling quite as amiable as might have been desired, you see. "That's certainly not my fault," she repeated.

"I never said it was," replied the cuckoo. "Why will you jump at conclusions so? It's a very bad habit; for very often you jump over them, you see, and go too far. One should always walk up to conclusions, very slowly and evenly, right foot first, then left, one with another—that's the way to get where you want to go, and feel sure of your ground. Do you see?"

"I don't know whether I do or not, and I'm not going to speak to you if you go on like that. You might see I don't want to be lectured when I am so unhappy."

"What are you unhappy about?"

"About Phil, of course. I won't tell you, for I believe you know," said Griselda. "Wasn't it you that sent him to play with me? I was so pleased, and I thought it was very kind of you; but it's all spoiled now."

"But I heard Dorcas saying that your aunt is going over to consult my Lady Lavender about it," said the cuckoo. "It'll be all right; you needn't be in such low spirits about nothing."

"Were you in the room then?" said Griselda. "How funny you are, cuckoo! But it isn't all right. Don't you see, poor little Phil will be coming up the wood path to-morrow afternoon to meet me, and I won't be there! I can't bear to think of it."

"Is that all?" said the cuckoo. "It really is extraordinary how some people make troubles out of nothing! We can easily tell Phil not to come till the day after. Come along."

"Come along," repeated Griselda; "what do you mean?"

"Oh, I forgot," said the cuckoo. "You don't

understand. Put out your hand. There, do you feel me?"

"Yes," said Griselda, stroking gently the soft feathers which seemed to be close under her hand. "Yes, I feel you."

"Well, then," said the cuckoo, put your arms round my neck, and hold me firm. I'll lift you up."

"How can you talk such nonsense, cuckoo?" said Griselda. "Why, one of my little fingers would clasp your neck. How can I put my arms round it?"

"Try," said the cuckoo.

Somehow Griselda had to try.

She held out her arms in the cuckoo's direction, as if she expected his neck to be about the size of a Shetland pony's, or a large Newfoundland dog's; and, to her astonishment, so it was! A nice, comfortable, feathery neck it felt—so soft that she could not help laying her head down upon it, and nestling in the downy cushion.

"That's right," said the cuckoo.

Then he seemed to give a little spring, and Griselda felt herself altogether lifted on to his back. She lay there as comfortable as possible—it felt so firm as well as soft. Up he flew a little way—then stopped short.

"Are you all right?" he inquired. "You're not afraid of falling off?"

"Oh, no," said Griselda; "not a bit."

"You needn't be," said the cuckoo, "for you couldn't if you tried. I'm going on, then."

"Where to?" said Griselda.

"Up the chimney first," said the cuckoo.

"But there'll never be room," said Griselda. "I might, perhaps, crawl up like a sweep, hands and knees, you know, like going up a ladder. But stretched out like this—it's just as if I were lying on a sofa—I couldn't go up the chimney."

"Couldn't you?" said the cuckoo. I intend to go, anyway, and take you with me. Shut your eyes—one, two, three—here goes—we'll be up the chimney before you know."

It was quite true. Griselda shut her eyes tight. She felt nothing but a pleasant sort of rush. Then she heard the cuckoo's voice saying:

"Well, wasn't that well done? Open your eyes and look about you."

Griselda did so. Where were they?

They were floating about above the top of the house, which Griselda saw down below them, looking dark and vast. She felt confused and bewildered.

"Cuckoo," she said, "I don't understand. Is it

I that have grown little, or you that have grown big?"

"Whichever you please," said the cuckoo. "You have forgotten. I told you long ago it is all a matter of fancy."

"Yes, if everything grew little together," persisted Griselda; "but it isn't everything. It's just you or me or both of us. And I don't think it can be me; for if any of me had grown little all would, and my eyes haven't grown little, for everything looks as big as usual, only you a great deal bigger. My eyes can't have grown bigger without the rest of me, surely, for the moon looks just the same. And I must have grown little, or else we couldn't have got up the chimney. Oh, cuckoo, you have put all my thinking into such a muddle!"

"Never mind," said the cuckoo. "It'll show you how little consequence big and little are of. Make yourself comfortable all the same. Are you all right? Shut your eyes if you like. I'm going pretty fast."

"Where to?" said Griselda.

"To Phil, of course," said the cuckoo. "What a bad memory you have! Are you comfortable?"

"Very, thank you," replied Griselda, giving the cuckoo's neck an affectionate hug as she spoke.

"That'll do, thank you. Don't throttle me, if

it's quite the same to you," said the cuckoo, "Here goes—one, two, three," and off he flew again.

Griselda shut her eyes and lay still. It was delicious—the gliding, yet darting motion, like nothing she had ever felt before. It did not make her the least giddy, either, but a slightly sleepy feeling came over her. She felt no inclination to open her eyes; and, indeed, at the rate they were going, she could have distinguished very little had she done so.

Suddenly the feeling in the air about her changed. For an instant it felt more rushy than before, and there was a queer, dull sound in her ears. Then she felt that the cuckoo had stopped.

"Where are we?" she asked.

"We've just come down a chimney again," said the cuckoo. "Open your eyes, and clamber down off my back, but don't speak loud, or you'll waken him, and that wouldn't do. There you are—the moonlight's coming in nicely at the window—you can see your way."

Griselda found herself in a little bedroom, quite a tiny one; and by the look of the simple furniture and the latticed window, she saw that she was not in a grand house. But everything looked very neat and nice, and on a little bed in one corner lay

a lovely sleeping child. It was Phil. He looked so pretty asleep—his shaggy curls all tumbling about, his rosy mouth half open as if smiling, one little hand tossed over his head, the other tight clasping a little basket which he had insisted on taking to bed with him, meaning as soon as he was dressed the next morning to run out and fill it with flowers for the little girl he had made friends with.

Griselda stepped up to the side of the bed on tip-toe. The cuckoo had disappeared, but Griselda heard his voice. It seemed to come from a little way up the chimney.

"Don't wake him," said the cuckoo, "but whisper what you want to say into his ear as soon as I have called him. He'll understand; he's accustomed to my ways."

Then came the old note, soft and musical as ever:

"Cuckoo, cuckoo, cuckoo. Listen, Phil," said the cuckoo; and without opening his eyes a change passed over the little boy's face. Griselda could see that he was listening to hear her message.

"He think's he's dreaming, I suppose," she said to herself with a smile. Then she whispered softly:

"Phil, dear, don't come to play with me to-morrow, for I can't come. But come the day after. I'll be at the wood path then."

"Welly well," murmured Phil. Then he put out

his two arms toward Griselda, all without opening his eyes, and she, bending down, kissed him softly.

"Phil's so sleepy," he whispered, like a baby almost. Then he turned over, and went to sleep more soundly than before.

"That'll do," said the cuckoo. "Come along, Griselda."

Griselda obediently made her way to the place whence the cuckoo's voice seemed to come.

"Shut your eyes and put your arms round my neck again," said the cuckoo.

She did not hesitate this time. It all happened just as before, Then came the same sort of rushy sound; then the cuckoo stopped, and Griselda opened her eyes.

They were up in the air again—a good way up too; for some grand old elms that stood beside the farm-house were gently waving their topmost branches a yard or two from where the cuckoo was poising himself and Griselda.

"Where shall we go to now?" he said. "Or would you rather go home? Are you tired?"

"Tired?!' exclaimed Griselda. "I should rather think not. How could I be tired, cuckoo?"

"Very well, don't excite yourself about nothing, whatever you do," said the cuckoo, "Say where you'd like to go."

"How can I?" said Griselda. "You know far more nice places than I do."

"You don't care to go back to the mandarins, or the butterflies, I suppose?" asked the cuckoo.

"No, thank you," said Griselda; "I'd like something new. And I'm not sure that I care for seeing any more countries of that kind, unless you could take me to the real fairyland."

"I can't do that, you know," said the cuckoo.

Just then a faint "soughing" sound among the branches suggested another idea to Griselda.

"Cuckoo," she exclaimed, "take me to the sea. It's such a time since I saw the sea. I can fancy I hear it; do take me to see it."

CHAPTER X.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MOON.

"That after supper-time has come,
And silver dews the meadow steep,
And all is silent in the home,
And even nurses are asleep,
That be it late, or be it soon,
Upon this lovely night in June
They both will step into the moon."

"VERY well," said the cuckoo. "You would like to look about you a little on the way, perhaps, Griselda, as we shall not be going down chimneys. or anything of that kind just at present."

"Yes," said Griselda. "I think I should. I'm rather tired of shutting my eyes, and I'm getting quite accustomed to flying about with you, cuckoo."

"Turn on your side, then," said the cuckoo, "and you won't have to twist your neck to see over my shoulder. Are you comfortable now? And, by-the-bye, as you may be cold, just feel under my

left wing. You'll find the feather mantle there that you had on once before. Wrap it round you. I tucked it in at the last moment, thinking you might want it."

"Oh, you dear, kind cuckoo!" cried Griselda. "Yes, I've found it. I'll tuck it all around me like a rug—that's it. I am so warm now, cuckoo."

"Here goes, then," said the cuckoo; and off they set. Had ever a little girl such a flight before? Floating, darting, gliding, sailing—no words can describe it. Griselda lay still in delight, gazing. all about her.

"How lovely the stars are, cuckoo!" she said. "It is true they're all great, big suns? I'd rather they weren't. I like to think of them as nice, funny little things."

"They're not all suns," said the cuckoo. "Not all those you're looking at now."

"I like the twinkling ones best," said Griselda. "They look so good-natured. Are they all twirling about always, cuckoo? Mr. Kneebreeches has just begun to teach me astronomy, and he says they are; but I'm not at all sure that he knows much about it."

"He's quite right all the same," replied the cuckoo.

"Oh, dear me! How tired they must be, then!"

said Griselda. "Do they never rest just for a minute?"

"Never."

"Why not?"

"Obeying orders," replied the cuckoo.

Griselda gave a little wriggle.

"What's the use of it?" she said. "It would be just as nice if they stood still now and then."

"Would it?" said the cuckoo. "I know somebody would find fault if they did. What would you say to no summer; no day, or no night, whichever it happened not to be, you see; nothing growing, and nothing to eat before long? That's what it would be if they stood still, you see, because——"

"Thank you, cuckoo," interrupted Griselda. "It's very nice to hear you—I mean, very dreadful to think of, but I dont want you to explain. I'll ask Mr. Kneebreeches when I'm at my lessons. You might tell me one thing, however. What's at the the other side of the moon?"

"There's a variety of opinions," said the cuckoo.

"What are they. Tell me the funniest."

"Some say all the unfinished work of the world is kept there," said the cuckoo.

"That's not funny," said Griselda. "What a messy place it must be! Why, even my unfinished work makes quite a heap. I don't like that opinion at all, cuckoo. Tell me another."

"I have heard," said the cuckoo, that among the places there you would find the country of the little black dogs. You know what sort of creatures those are?"

"Yes, I suppose so, said Griselda rather reluctantly.

"There are a good many of them in this world, as of course you know," continued the cuckoo. "But up there they are much worse than here. When a child has made a great pet of one down there, I've heard tell, the fairies take him up here when his parents and nurses think he's sleeping quietly in his bed, and make him work hard all night, with his own particular little black dog on his back. And it's so dreadfully heavy—for every time he takes it on his back down here it grows a pound heavier up there—that by morning the child is quite worn out. I dare say you've noticed how haggard and miserable some ill-tempered children get to look—now you'll know the reason."

"Thank you, cuckoo," said Griselda again; "but I can't say I like this opinion about the other side of the moon any better than the first. If you please, I would rather not talk about it any more."

"Oh, but it's not so bad an idea, after all," said the cuckoo. "Lots of children, they say, get quite cured in the country of the little black dogs. It's

this way—for every time a child refuses to take the dog on his back down here it grows a pound lighter up there, so at last any sensible child learns how much better it is to have nothing to say to it at all, and gets out of the way of it, you see. Of course, there are children whom nothing would cure, I suppose. What becomes of them I really can't say. Very likely they get crushed into pancakes by the weight of the dogs at last, and then nothing more is ever heard of them."

"Horrid!" said Griselda, with a shudder. "Don't let's talk about it any more, cuckoo; tell me your own opinion of what there really is on the other side of the moon."

The cuckoo was silent for a moment. Then suddenly he stopped short in the middle of his flight.

"Would you like to see for yourself, Griselda?" he said. "There would be about time to do it," he added to himself, "and it would fulfill her other wish too."

"See the moon for myself, do you mean?" cried Griselda, clasping her hands. "I should rather think I would. Will you really take me there, cuckoo?"

"To the other side," said the cuckoo. "I couldn't take you to this side."

"Why not? Not that I'd care to go to this side

as much as to the other; for, of course, we can see this side from here. But I'd like to know why you couldn't take me there."

"For reasons," said the cuckoo dryly. "I'll give you one if you like. If I took you to this side of the moon you wouldn't be yourself when you got there."

"Who would I be, then?"

"Griselda," said the cuckoo, "I told you once that there are a great many things you don't know. Now I'll tell you something more. There are a great many things you're not intended to know."

"Very well." said Griselda. "But do tell me when you're going on again, and where you are going to take me to. There's no harm in my asking that?"

"No," said the cuckoo. "I'm going on immediately; and I'm going to take you where you wanted to go to, only you must shut your eyes again, and lie perfectly still without talking, for I must put on steam—a good deal of steam—and I can't talk to you. Are you all right?"

"All right," said Griselda.

She had hardly said the words when she seemed to fall asleep. The rushing sound in the air all round her increased so greatly that she was con-

scious of nothing else. For a moment or two she tried to remember where she was and where she was going, but it was useless. She forgot everything, and knew nothing more of what was passing till—till she heard the cuckoo again.

"Cuckoo, cuckoo; wake up, Griselda," he said.

Griselda sat up.

Where was she?

Not, certainly, where she had been when she went to sleep. Not on the cuckoo's back; for there he was standing beside her, as tiny as usual. Either he had grown little again or she had grown big—which, she supposed, it did not much matter. Only it was very queer!

"Where am I, cuckoo?" she said.

"Where you wished to be," he replied. "Look about you and see."

Griselda looked about her. What did she see? Something that I can only give you a faint idea of, children; something so strange and unlike what she had ever seen before that only in a dream could you see it as Griselda saw it. And yet why it seemed to her so strange and unnatural I cannot well explain; if I could, my words would be as good as pictures, which I know they are not.

After all, it was only the sea she saw; but such a great, strange, silent sea, for there were no waves.

Griselda was seated on the shore, close beside the water's edge; but it did not come lapping up to her feet in the pretty, coaxing way that our sea does when it is in good humor. There were here and there faint ripples on the surface, caused by the slight breezes which now and then came softly around Griselda's face, but that was all. King Canute might have sat "from then till now" by this still, lifeless ocean, without the chance of reading his silly attendants a lesson—if, indeed, there ever were such silly people, which I very much doubt.

Griselda gazed with all her eyes. Then she suddenly gave a little shiver,

"What's the matter?" said the cuckoo. "You have the mantle on—you're not cold?"

"No," said Griselda, "I'm not cold; but somehow, cuckoo, I feel a little frightened. The sea is so strange and so dreadfully big; and the light is so queer, too. What is the light, cuckoo? It isn't moonlight, is it?"

"Not exactly," said the cuckoo. "You can't both have your cake and eat it, Griselda. Look up at the sky. There's no moon there, is there?"

"No," said Griselda; "but what lots of stars, cuckoo. The light comes from them, I suppose? And where's the sun, cuckoo? Will it be rising soon? It isn't always like this up here, is it?"

"Bless you, no," said the cuckoo. "There's sun enough, and rather too much, sometimes. How would you like a day a fortnight long and nights to match? If it had been daytime here just now I couldn't have brought you. It's just about the very middle of the night now; and in about a week of your days the sun will begin to rise, because, you see——"

"Oh, dear cuckoo, please don't explain!" cried Griselda. "I'll promise to ask Mr. Kneebreeches, I will, indeed. In fact, he was telling me something just like it to-day, or yesterday—which should I say?—at my astronomy lesson. And that makes it so strange that you should have brought me up here to-night to see for myself, doesn't it, cuckoo?"

"An odd coincidence," said the cuckoo.

"What would Mr. Kneebreeches think if I told him where I had been?" continued Griselda. "Only, you see, cuckoo, I never tell anybody about what I see when I am with you."

"No, replied the cuckoo; "better not." ("Not that you could if you tried," he added to himself.") "You're not frightened now, Griselda, are you?"

"No, I don't think I am," she replied. "But, cuckoo, isn't this sea awfully big?"

"Pretty well," said the cuckoo. "Just half, or nearly half, the size of the moon; and no doubt

Mr. Kneebreeches has told you that the moon's diameter and circumference are respec——"

"Oh, don't cuckoo!" interrupted Griselda beseechingly. "I want to enjoy myself, and not to have lessons. Tell me something funny, cuckoo. Are there any mermaids in the moon-sea?"

"Not exactly," said the cuckoo.

"What a stupid way to answer!" said Griselda.

"There's no sense in that; there either must be or must not be. There couldn't be half-mermaids."

"I don't know about that," replied the cuckoo. "They might have left their tails behind them, like Bopeep's sheep, you know; and some day they might be coming to find them again, you know. That would do for 'not exactly,' wouldn't it?"

"Cuckoo, you're laughing at me," said Griselda.

"Tell me, are there any mermaids, or fairies, or water-sprites, or any of those sorts of creatures, here?"

"I must still say 'not exactly,'" said the cuckoo. "There are beings here, or rather there have been, and there may be again; but you, Griselda, can know no more than this."

His tone was rather solemn, and again Griselda felt a little "eerie."

"It's a dreadfully long way from home, anyway," she said. "I feel as if, when I go back, I

shall perhaps find I have been away fifty years or so, like the little boy in the fairy story. Cuckoo, I think I would like to go home. Mayn't I get on your back again?"

"Presently," said the cuckoo. "Don't be uneasy, Griselda. Perhaps I'll take you home by a short cut."

"Was ever any child here before?" asked Griselda, after a little pause.

"Yes," said the cuckoo.

"And did they get safe home again?"

"Quite," said the cuckoo. "It's so silly of you, Griselda, to have all these ideas still about far and near, and big and little, and long and short, after all I've taught you and all you've seen."

"I'm very sorry," said Griselda humbly; "but you see, cuckoo, I can't help it. I suppose I'm made so."

"Perhaps," said the cuckoo meditatively.

He was silent for a minute. Then he spoke again. "Look over there, Griselda," he said. "There's the short cut."

Griselda looked. Far, far over the sea, in the silent distance, she saw a tiny speck of light. It was very tiny; but yet the strange thing was that, far away as it appeared and minute as it was, it seemed to throw off a thread of light to Griselda's

very feet—right across the great sheet of faintly gleaming water. And as Griselda looked, the thread seemed to widen and grow, becoming at the same time brighter and clearer, till at last it lay before her like a path of glowing light.

"Am I to walk along there?" she said softly to the cuckoo.

"No," he replied; "wait."

Griselda waited, looking still, and presently in the middle of the shining streak she saw something slowly moving—something from which the light came, for the nearer it got to her the shorter grew the glowing path, and behind the moving object the sea looked no brighter than before it had appeared.

At last—at last, it came quite near—near enough for Griselda to distinguish clearly what it was.

It was a little boat—the prettiest, the loveliest little boat that ever was seen; and it was rowed by a little figure that at first sight Griselda felt certain was a fairy. For it was a child with bright hair and silvery wings, which with every movement sparkled and shone like a thousand diamonds.

Griselda sprang up and clapped her hands with delight. At the sound the child in the boat turned and looked at her. For one instant she could not remember where she had seen him before; then she exclaimed joyfully:

"It is Phil! Oh, cuckoo, it is Phil! Have you turned into a fairy, Phil?"

But, alas! as she spoke the light faded away, the boy's figure disappeared, the sea and the shore and the sky were all as they had been before, lighted only by the faint, strange gleaming of the stars. Only the boat remained. Griselda saw it close to her, in the shallow water a few feet from where she stood.

"Cuckoo," she exclaimed in a tone of reproach and disappointment, "where is Phil gone? Why did you send him away?"

"I didn't send him away," said the cuckoo. "You don't understand. Never mind, but get into the boat. It'll be all right, you'll see."

"But are we to go away and leave Phil here, all alone at the other side of the moon?" said Griselda feeling ready to cry.

"Oh, you silly girl!" said the cuckoo. "Phil's all right; and in some ways he has a great deal more sense than you, I can tell you. Get into the boat, and make yourself comfortable; lie down at the bottom, and cover yourself up with the mantle. You needn't be afraid of wetting your feet a little; moon water never gives cold. There, now."

Griselda did as she was told. She was beginning to feel rather tired; and it certainly was very com-

fortable at the bottom of the boat, with the nice warm feather mantle well tucked round her.

"Who will row?" she said sleepily. "You can't, cuckoo; with your tiny little claws, you could never hold the oars, I'm——"

"Hush!" said the cuckoo; and whether he rowed or not Griselda never knew.

Off they glided somehow; but it seemed to Griselda that somebody rowed, for she heard the soft dip, dip of the oars as they went along, so regularly that she couldn't help beginning to count in time—one, two, three, four—on, on—she thought she had got nearly to a hundred, when—

CHAPTER XI.

"CUCKOO, CUCKOO, GOOD-BY!"

"Children, try to be good!
That is the end of all teaching;
Easily understood,
And very easy in preaching.
And if you find it hard,
Your efforts you need but double;
Nothing deserves reward
Unless it has given us trouble."

—WHEN she forgot everything, and fell fast, fast asleep, to wake, of course, in her own little bed as usual!

One of your tricks again, Mr. Cuckoo," she said to herself with a smile. "However, I don't mind. It was a short cut home, and it was very comfortable in the boat; and I certainly saw a great deal last night; and I'm very much obliged to you—particularly for making it all right with Phil about not coming to play with me to-day. Ah! that reminds me, I'm in disgrace. I wonder if Aunt Grizzel will really make me stay in my room all day. How tired I shall be! and what will Mr.

Kneebreeches think? But it serves me right. I was very cross and rude."

There came a tap at the door. It was Dorcas with the hot water.

"Good-morning, missie," she said gently, not feeling, to tell the truth, very sure as to what sort of a humor "missie" was likely to be found in this morning. "I hope you've slept well."

"Exceedingly well, thank you, Dorcas. I've had a delightful night," replied Griselda amiably, smiling to herself at the thought of what Dorcas would say if she knew where she had been and what she had been doing since last she saw her.

That's good news," said Dorcas in a tone of relief; "and I've good news for you, too, missie. At least, I hope you'll think it so. Your aunt has ordered the carriage for quite early this morning—so you see she really wants to please you, missie, about playing with little Master Phil; and if to-morrow's a fine day, we'll be sure to find some way of letting him know to come."

"Thank you, Dorcas. I hope it will be all right, and that Lady Lavender won't say anything against it. I dare say she won't. I feel ever so much happier this morning, Dorcas; and I'm very sorry I was so rude to Aunt Grizzel, for of course I know I should obey her."

"That's right, missie," said Dorcas approvingly.

"It seems to me, Dorcas," said Griselda dreamily, when, a few minutes later, she was standing by the window while the old servant brushed out her thick, wavy hair, "it seems to me, Dorcas, that it's all 'obeying orders' together. There's the sun now, just getting up, and the moon just going to bed—they are always obeying, aren't they? I wonder why it should be so hard for people—for children, at least."

"To be sure, missie, you do put it in a way of your own," replied Dorcas, somewhat mystified; "but I see how you mean, I think, and it's quite true. And it is a hard lesson to learn."

"I want to learn it well, Dorcas," said Griselda resolutely. "So you will please tell Aunt Grizzel that I'm very sorry about last night, and I'll do just as she likes about staying in my room or anything? But, if she would let me, I'd far rather go down and do my lessons as usual for Mr. Knee-breeches. I won't ask to go out into the garden; but I would like to please Aunt Grizzel by doing my lessons very well."

Dorcas was both delighted and astonished. Never had she known her little "missie" so altogether submissive and reasonable.

"I only hope the child's not going to be ill," she

said to herself. But she proved a skillful ambassadress, notwithstanding her misgivings; and Griselda's imprisonment confined her only to the bounds of the house and terrace walk, instead of within the four walls of her own little room, as she had feared.

Lessons were very well done that day, and Mr. Kneebreeches' report was all that could be wished.

"I am particularly gratified," he remarked to Miss Grizzel, "by the intelligence and interest Miss Griselda displays with regard to the study of astronomy, which I have recently begun to give her some elementary instruction in. And, indeed, I have no fault to find with the way in which any of the young lady's tasks are performed."

"I am extremely glad to hear it," replied Miss Grizzel graciously; and the kiss with which she answered Griselda's request for forgiveness was a very hearty one.

And it was "all right" about Phil.

Lady Lavendar knew all about him; his father and mother were friends of hers, for whom she had a great regard, and for some time she had been intending to ask the little boy to spend the day at Merrybrow Hall, to be introduced to goddaughter Griselda. So, of course, as Lady Lavander knew all about him, there could be no objection to his playing in Miss Grizzel's garden.

And "to-morrow" turned out a fine day. So altogether you can imagine that Griselda felt very happy and light-hearted as she ran down the wood path to meet her little friend, whose rosy face soon appeared among the bushes.

"What did you do yesterday, Phil?" asked Griselda. "Were you sorry not to come to play with me?"

"No," said Phil mysteriously. I didn't mind. I was looking for the way to fairy-land to show you, and I do believe I've found it. Oh, it is such a pretty way!"

Griselda smiled.

"I'm afraid the way to fairy-land isn't so easily found," she said. "But I'd like to hear about where you went. Was it far?"

"A good way," said Phil. "Won't you come with me? It's in the wood. I can show you quite well, and we can be back by tea-time."

"Very well," said Griselda; and off they set.

Whether it was the way to fairy-land or not, it was not to be wondered at that little Phil thought so. He led Griselda right across the wood to a part where she had never been before. It was a sort of tiny glade in the very middle of the wood —a little green nest inclosed all around by trees; and right through it the merry brook came rip-

pling along as if rejoicing at getting out into the sunlight again for awhile. And all the choicest and sweetest of the early summer flowers seemed to be collected here in greater variety and profusion than in any other part of the wood.

"Isn't it nice?" said Phil as he nestled down beside Griselda on the soft mossy grass. "It must have been a fairies' garden some time, I'm sure; and I shouldn't wonder if one of the doors into fairy-land is hidden somewhere here, if only we could find it."

"If only!" said Griselda. "I don't think we shall find it, Phil; but, anyway, this is a lovely place you've found, and I'd like to come here very often."

Then at Phil's suggestion they set to work to make themselves a house in the center of this fairies' garden, as he called it. They managed it very much to their own satisfaction, by dragging some logs of wood and big stones from among the brushwood hard by, and filling the holes up with bracken and furze.

"And if the fairies do come here," said Phil, "they'll be very pleased to find a house all ready, won't they?"

Then they had to gather flowers to ornament the house inside, and dry leaves and twigs all ready

for a fire in one corner. Altogether it was quite a business; I can assure you; and when it was finished they were very hot and very tired, and rather dirty. Suddenly a thought struck Griselda.

"Phil," she said, "it must be getting late."

"Past tea-time?" he said coolly.

"I dare say it is. Look how low down the sun has got. Come, Phil, we must be quick. Where is the place we came out of the wood at?"

"Here," said Phil, diving at a little opening among the bushes.

Griselda followed him. He had been a good guide hitherto, and she certainly could not have found her way alone. They scrambled on for some way, then the bushes suddenly seemed to grow less thick, and in a minute they came out upon a little path.

"Phil," said Griselda, "this isn't the way we came."

"Isn't it?" said Phil, looking about him. Then we must have comed the wrong way."

"I'm afraid so," said Griselda, "and it seems to be so late already. I'm so sorry; for Aunt Grizzel will be vexed, Phil?"

"I don't care if she are," replied Phil valiantly.

"You shouldn't say that, Phil. You know we shouldn't have stayed so long playing."

"Nebber mind," said Phil. "If it was mother I would mind. Mother's so good, you don't know. And she never 'colds me, except when I am naughty—so I do mind."

"She wouldn't like you to be out so late, I'm sure," said Griselda in distress; "and it's most my fault, for I'm the biggest. Now, which way shall we go?"

They had followed the little path till it came to a point where two roads, rough cart-ruts only, met; or, rather, where the path ran across the road. Right, or left, or straight on, which should it be? Griselda stood still in perplexity. Already it was growing dusk; already the moon's soft light was beginning faintly to glimmer through the branches. Griselda looked up to the sky.

"To think," she said to herself— "to think that I should not know my way in a little bit of a wood like this—I that was up at the other side of the moon last night."

The remembrance put another thought into her mind.

"Cuckoo, cuckoo," she said softly, "couldn't you help us?"

Then she stood still and listened, holding Phil's cold little hands in her own.

She was not disappointed. Presently, in the dis-

tance, came the well-known cry, "Cuckoo, cuckoo," so soft and far away, but yet so clear.

Phil clapped his hands.

"He's calling us," he cried joyfully. "He's going to show us the way. That's how he calls me always. Good cuckoo, we're coming;" and, pulling Griselda along, he darted down the road to the right—the direction from whence came the cry.

They had some way to go, for they had wandered far in a wrong direction; but the cuckoo never failed them. Whenever they were at a loss—whenever the path turned or divided, they heard his clear, sweet call; and without the least misgiving they followed it, till at last it brought them out upon the high road, a stone's throw from Farmer Crouch's gate.

"I know the way now, good cuckoo," exclaimed Phil. "I can go home alone now, if your aunt will be vexed with you."

"No, said Griselda, "I must take you quite all the way home, Phil dear. I promised to take care of you; and if nurse scolds any one it must be me, not you."

There was a little bustle about the door of the farm-house as the children wearily came up to it. Two or three men were standing together receiving directions from Mr. Crouch himself, and Phil's

nurse was talking eagerly. Suddenly she caught sight of the truants.

"Here he is, Mr. Crouch!" she exclaimed. "No need now to send to look for him. Oh, Master Phil, how could you stay out so late? And to-night of all nights, just when your—I forgot, I mustn't say. Come into the parlor at once—and this little girl, who is she?"

"She isn't a little girl, she's a young lady," said Master Phil, putting on his lordly air; "and she's to come into the parlor and have some supper with me, and then some one must take her home to her auntie's house that's what I say."

More to please Phil than from any wish for "supper," for she was really in a fidget to get home, Griselda let the little boy lead her into the parlor. But she was for a moment perfectly startled by the cry that broke from him when he opened the door and looked into the room. A lady was standing there, gazing out of the window, though in the quickly growing darkness she could hardly have distinguished the little figure she was watching for so anxiously.

The noise of the door opening made her look round.

"Phil!" she cried, "my own little Phil! where have you been to? You didn't know I was waiting here for you, did you?"

"Mother! mother!" shouted Phil, darting into his mother's arms.

But Griselda drew back into the shadow of the doorway, and tears filled her eyes as for a minute or two she listened to the cooings and caressings of the mother and son. Only for a minute, however. Then Phil called to her.

"Mother, mother," he cried again, "you must kiss Griselda too! She's the little girl that is so kind and plays with me; and she has no mother," he added in a lower tone.

The lady put her arm around Griselda, and kissed her too. She did not seem surprised.

"I think I know about Griselda," she said very kindly, looking into her face with her gentle eyes, blue and clear, like Phil's.

And then Griselda found courage to say how uneasy she was about the anxiety her aunts would be feeling, and a messenger was sent off at once to tell of her being safe at the farm.

But Griselda herself the kind lady would not let go till she had had some nice supper with Phil, and was both warmed and rested.

"And what were you about, children, to lose your way?" she asked presently,

"I took Griselda to a place that I thought was the way to fairy-land; and then we stayed to build

a house for the fairies, in case they come; and then we came out at the wrong side, and it got dark," explained Phil.

"And was it the way to fairy-land?" asked his mother, smiling.

Griselda shook her head as she replied.

"Phil doesn't understand yet," she said gently. He isn't old enough. The way to the true fairy-land is hard to find, and we must each find it for ourselves, mustn't we?"

She looked up in the lady's face as she spoke, and saw that she understood.

"Yes, dear child," she answered softly, and perhaps a very little sadly. "But Phil and you may help each other, and I perhaps may help you both."

Griselda slid her hand into the lady's. "You're not going to take Phil away, are you?" she whispered.

"No, I have come to stay here," she answered; "and Phil's father is coming too, soon. We are going to live at the White House—the house on the other side of the wood, on the way to Merrybrow. Are you glad, children?"

. . . . . .

Griselda had a curious dream that night—merely a dream, nothing else. She dreamed that the

cuckoo came once more; this time, he told her, to say "good-by."

"For you will not need me now," he said. "I leave you in good hands, Griselda. You have friends now who will understand you—friends who will help you both to work and to play—better friends than the mandarins, or the butterflies, or even than your faithful old cuckoo."

And when Griselda tried to speak to him, to thank him for his goodness, to beg him still sometimes to come to see her, he gently fluttered away. "Cuckoo, cuckoo, cuckoo," he warbled; but somehow the last "cuckoo" sounded like "good-by."

In the morning, when Griselda awoke, her pillow was wet with tears. Thus many stories end. She was happy, very happy in the thought of her kind new friends; but there were tears for the one she had said farewell to, even though he was only a cuckoo in a clock.

THE END

PART II.

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THE BLUE DWARFS:

AN ADVENTURE IN THURINGEN

"And then on the top of the Caldon Low
There was no one left but me."

MARY HOWITT.

"I LIKED the blue dwarfs the best—far, far the best of anything," said Olive.

"'The blue dwarfs!'" repeated Rex. "What *do* you mean? Why can't you say what you mean plainly? Girls have such a stupid way of talking!"

"What can be plainer than *the blue dwarfs*?" said Olive rather snappishly, though, it must be allowed, with some reason. "We were talking about the things we liked best at the china place. *You* said the stags' heads and the inkstands, and *I* say the blue dwarfs."

"But I didn't see any dwarfs," persisted Rex.

"Well, I can't help it if you didn't. You had just as much chance of seeing them as I had. They

were in a corner by themselves—little figures about two inches high, all with blue coats on. There were about twelve of them, all different, but all little dwarfs or gnomes. One was sitting on a barrel, one was turning head-over-heels, one was cuddling his knees—all funny ways like that. Oh, they were lovely!"

"I wish I had seen them better," said Rex regretfully. "I do remember seeing a tray full of little blue-looking dolls, but I didn't notice what they were."

Olive did not at once answer. Her eyes were fixed on something she saw passing before the window. It was a very, very little man. He was not exactly hump-backed, but his figure was somewhat deformed, and he was so small that but for the sight of his rather wizened old face one could hardly have believed he was a full-grown man. His eyes were bright and beady-looking, like those of a good-natured little weasel, if there be such a thing, and his face lighted up with a smile as he caught sight of the two, to him, strange-looking children at the open window of the little village inn.

"Guten Tag," he said, nodding to them; and "Guten Tag," replied the children, as they had learnt to do by this time to everybody they met

For in these remote villages it would be thought the greatest breach of courtesy to pass any one without this friendly greeting.

Rex drew a long breath when the dwarf had passed.

"Olive——" he began, but Olive interrupted him.

"Rex," she said eagerly, "that's *exactly* like them—like the blue dwarfs, I mean. Only, of course, their faces were prettier—nice little china faces, rather crumply looking, but quite nice; and then their coats were such a pretty nice blue. I think," she went on consideringly—"I think, if I had that little man and washed his face *very* well, and got him a bright blue coat, he would look just like one of the blue dwarfs grown big."

Rex looked at Olive with a queer expression.

"Olive," he said in rather an awe-struck tone; "Olive, do you think perhaps they're *real*? Do you think perhaps somewhere in this country—in those queer dark woods, perhaps—that there are real blue dwarfs, and that somebody must have seen them and made the little china ones like them? Perhaps," and his voice dropped and grew still more solemn; "*perhaps*, Olive, that little man's one of them, and they may have to take off their blue coats when they're walking about. Do you know, I think it's a little, just a very little frightening? Don't you, Olive?"

"No, of course I don't," said Olive, and, to do her justice, her rather sharp answer was meant as much to reassure her little brother as to express any feeling of impatience. Rex was quite a little fellow, only eight, and Olive, who was nearly twelve, remembered that when she was as little as that, she used sometimes to feel frightened about things which she now couldn't see anything the least frightening in. And she remembered how once or twice some of her big cousins had laughed at her, and amused themselves by telling her all sorts of nonsense, which still seemed terrible to her when she was alone in her room in the dark at night. "Of course there's nothing frightening in it," she said. "It would be rather a funny idea, I think. Of course it can't be, you know, Rex. There are no dwarfs, and gnomes, and fairies now."

"But that little man was a dwarf," said Rex.

Yes, but a dwarf needn't be a fairy sort of person," explained Olive. "He's just a common little man, only he's never grown as big as other people. Perhaps he had a bad fall when he was a baby—that might stop his growing."

"Would it?" said Rex. "I didn't know that. I hope I hadn't a bad fall when I was a baby. Everybody says I'm very small for my age." And Rex looked with concern at his short but sturdy legs.

Olive laughed outright.

"Oh, Rex, what a funny boy you are! No, certainly, you are not a dwarf. You're as straight and strong as you can be."

"Well, but," said Rex, returning to the first subject, "I do think it's very queer about that little dwarf man coming up the street just as you were telling me about the blue dwarfs. And he *did* look at us in a funny way, Olive, whatever you say, just as if he had heard what we were talking about."

"All the people look at us in a funny way here," said Olive. "We must look very queer to them. Your sailor suit, Rex, and my 'Bolero' hat must look to them quite as queer as the women's purple skirts, with bright green aprons, look to us."

"Or the bullock-carts," said Rex. Do you remember how queer we thought them at first? *Now* we've got quite used to seeing queer things, haven't we, Olive, Oh! now, do look there—at the top of the street—there Olive, did you *ever* see such a load as that woman is carrying in the basket on her back? Why, it's as big as a house!"

He seemed to have forgotten about the dwarfs, and Olive was rather glad of it. These two children were travelling with their uncle and aunt in a rather out-of-the-way part of Germany. Out-of-the-way, that is to say, to most of the regular summer tourists from other countries, who prefer

going where they are more sure of finding the comforts and luxuries they are accustomed to at home. But it was by no means out-of-the-way in the sense of being dull or deserted. It is a very busy part of the world indeed. You would be amazed if I were to tell you some of the beautiful things that are made in these bare homely little German cottages. For all about in the neighborhood there are great manufactories and warehouses for china and glass, and many other things; and some parts of the work are done by the people at home in their own houses. The morning of the day of which I am telling you had been spent by the children and their friends in visiting a very large china manufactory, and their heads were full of the pretty and wonderful things they had seen.

And now they were waiting in the best parlor of the village inn while their uncle arranged about a carriage to take them all on to the small town where they were to stay a few days. Their aunt was tired, and was resting a little on the sofa, and they had planted themselves on the broad window-sill, and were looking out with amusement at all that passed.

"What have you two been chattering about all this time?" said their aunt, suddenly looking up. "I think I must have been asleep a little, but I

have heard your voices going on like two birds twittering."

"Have we disturbed you, Auntie?" asked Olive, with concern.

"Oh no, not a bit; but come here and tell me what you have been talking about."

Instantly Rex's mind went back to the dwarfs.

"Auntie," he said seriously, "perhaps you can tell me better than Olive can. Are there really countries of dwarfs, and are they a kind of fairies, Auntie?"

Auntie looked rather puzzled.

"Dwarfs, Rex?" she said; "countries of dwarfs? How do you mean?"

Olive hastened to explain. Auntie was very much amused.

"Certainly," she said, "we have already seen so many strange things in our travels that it is better not to be too sure what we may not see. But any way, Rex, you may be quite easy in your mind, that if ever you come across any of the dwarfs, you will find them very good-natured and amiable, only you must be very respectful—always say 'Sir,' or 'My lord,' or something like that to them, and bow a great deal. And you must never seem to think anything they do the least odd, not even if they propose to you to walk on your head, or to eat roast fir-cones for dinner, for instance."

Auntie was quite young—not so very much older than Olive—and very merry. Olive's rather "grown-up" tones and manners used sometimes to tempt her to make fun of the little girl, which, to tell the truth, Olive did not always take quite in good part. And it must for Olive be allowed, that Auntie did sometimes allow her spirits and love of fun to run away with her a little too far, just like pretty unruly ponies, excited by the fresh air and sunshine, who toss their heads and gallop off. It is great fun at first and very nice to see, but one is sometimes afraid they may do some mischief on the way—without meaning it, of course; and, besides, it is not always so easy to pull them up as it was to start them.

Just as Auntie finished speaking the door opened and their uncle came in. He was Auntie's elder brother—a good deal older—and very kind and sensible. At once all thoughts of the dwarfs or what Auntie had been saying danced out of Rex's curly head. Like a true boy he flew off to his uncle, besieging him with questions as to what sort of a carriage they were to go on in—*was* it an ox-cart; oh, mightn't they *for once* go in an ox-cart? and might he—oh, might he sit beside the driver in front?

His uncle laughed and replied to his questions,

but Olive stayed beside the sofa, staring gravely at her aunt.

"Auntie," she said, "you're not *in earnest*, are you, about there being really a country of dwarfs?"

Olive was twelve. Perhaps you will think her very silly to have imagined for a moment that her aunt's joke could be anything but a joke, especially as she had been so sensible about not letting Rex get anything into his head which could frighten him. But I am not sure that she was so very silly after all. She had read in her geography about the Lapps and Finns, the tiny little men of the north, whom one might very well describe as dwarfs; there might be dwarfs in these stange Thuringian forests, which were little spoken of in geography books; Auntie knew more of such things than she did, for she had traveled in this country before. Then with her own eyes Olive had seen a dwarf, and though she had said to Rex that he was just an odd dwarf by himself as it were, not one of a race, how could she tell but what he might be one of a number of such queer little people? And even the blue dwarfs themselves—the little figures in the china manufactory—rather went to prove it than not.

"They may have taken the idea of dwarfs from the real ones, as Rex said," thought Olive. "Any

way I shall look well about me if we go through any of these forests again. They must live in the forests, for Auntie said they eat roast fir-cones for dinner."

All these thoughts were crowding through her mind as she stared up into Auntie's face and asked solemnly—

"Auntie, were you in earnest?"

Auntie's blue eyes sparkled.

"In earnest, Olive?" she said. "Of course! Why shouldn't I be in earnest? But come, quick, we must get our things together. Your uncle must have got a carriage."

"Yes," said he, "I have. *Not* an ox-cart, Rex. I'm sorry for your sake, but for no one else's; for I don't think there would be much left of us by the end of the journey if we were to be jogged along the forest roads in an ox-cart. No! I have got quite a respectable vehicle; but we must stop an hour or two on the way, to rest the horses and give them a feed, otherwise we could not get through to-night."

"Where shall we stop?" said Auntie, as with the bundles of shawls and bags they followed the children's uncle to the door.

"There is a little place in the forest, where they can look after the horses," said he; "and I daresay we can get some coffee there for ourselves, if we

want it. It is a pretty little nook. I remember it long ago, and I shall be glad to see it again."

Olive had pricked up her ears. "A little place in the forest!" she said to herself; "that may be near where the dwarfs live; it is most likely not far from here, because of the one we saw." She would have liked to ask her uncle about it, but something in the look of her aunt's eyes kept her from doing so.

"Perhaps she *was* joking," thought Olive to herself. "But perhaps she doesn't know; *she* didn't see the real dwarf. It would be rather nice if I did find them, *then* Auntie couldn't laugh at me any more."

They were soon comfortably settled in the carriage, and set off. The first part of the drive was not particularly interesting; and it was so hot, though already afternoon, that they were all—Olive especially, you may be sure—delighted to exchange the open country for the pleasant shade of a grand pine forest, through which their road now lay.

"Is it a very large forest, Uncle?" said Olive.

"Yes, very large," he replied rather sleepily, to tell the truth; for both he and Auntie had been nodding a little, and Rex had once or twice been fairly asleep. But Olive's imagination was far too hard at work to let her sleep.

"The largest in Europe?" she went on, without giving much thought to poor Uncle's sleepiness.

"Oh, yes, by far," he replied, for he had not heard clearly what she said, and fancied it was "the largest hereabouts."

"Dear me!" thought Olive, looking round her with awe and satisfaction. "If there are dwarfs anywhere, then it must be here."

And she was just beginning another. "And please, Uncle, is——?" when her aunt looked up and said lazily—

"Oh, my dear child, do be quiet! Can't you go to sleep yourself a little? We shall have more than enough of the forest before we are out of it." Which offended Olive so much that she relapsed into silence.

Auntie was a truer prophet than she knew, for when she got to the little hamlet in the wood, where they were to rest, something proved to be wrong with one of the horse's shoes—*so* wrong, indeed, that after a prolonged examination, at which all the inhabitants turned out to assist, it was decided that the horse must be re-shod before he could go any farther; and this made it impossible for the party who had come in the carriage to go any farther either. For the nearest smithy was two miles off; the horse must be led there and back by

the driver, which would take at least two, if not three, hours. It was now past six, and they had come barely half way. The driver shook his head, and said he would not like to go on to the town till morning. The horse had pricked his foot; it might cause inflammation to drive him farther without a rest, and the carriage was far too heavy for the other horse alone, which had suddenly struck the children's uncle as a brilliant idea.

"There would be no difficulty about the harnessing, any way," he said to Auntie, laughing, "for all the vehicles hereabouts drawn by one horse have the animal at one side of a pole, instead of between shafts."

But Auntie thought it better to give in.

"It really doesn't much matter," she said; "we can stay here well enough. There are two bedrooms, and no doubt they can give us something to eat—beer and sausages, and brown bread, any way."

And so it was settled, greatly to Olive's satisfaction; it would give her capital opportunities for a dwarf hunt, though as to this she kept her own counsel.

The landlady of the little post-house where they had stopped was accustomed to occasional visits of this kind from benighted or distressed travel-

lers. She thought nothing of turning her two daughters out of their bedroom, which, it must be owned, was very clean, for Auntie and Olive, and a second room on the ground-floor was prepared for Rex and his uncle. She had coffee ready in five minutes, and promised them a comfortable supper before bedtime. Altogether, everything seemed very satisfactory, and when they felt a little refreshed, Auntie proposed a walk—"a good long walk," she said, "would do us good. And the landlady says we get out of the forest up there behind the house, where the ground rises, and that there is a lovely view. It will be rather a climb, but it isn't more than three-quarters of an hour from here, and we have not walked all day."

Uncle thought it a good idea, and Rex was ready to start at once; but Olive looked less pleased.

"Don't you want to come, Olive?" said Auntie. "Are you tired? You didn't take a nap like the rest of us."

"I am a little tired," said Olive, which was true in one sense, though not in another, for she was quite fit for a walk. It struck her that her excuse was not quite an honest one, so she added, "If you don't mind, I would rather stay about here. I don't mind being alone, and I have my book. And I do so like the forest."

"Very well," said her uncle; "only don't lose yourself. She is perfectly safe," he added, turning to her aunt; "there are neither wolves, nor bears, nor robbers nowadays, in these peaceful forests."

So the three set off, leaving Olive to her own devices. She waited till they were out of sight, then she made her preparations.

"I'd better take my purse," she said to herself, "in case I meet the dwarfs. Auntie told me to be very polite, and perhaps they would like some of these tiny pieces; they just look as if they were meant for them." So she chose out a few one-pfennig copper coins, which are much smaller than our farthings, and one or two silver pieces, worth about twopence-halfpenny each, still smaller. Then she put in her pocket half a slice of the brown bread they had had with their coffee, and arming herself, more for appearance sake than anything else, with her parasol and the book she had with her in her travelling bag, she set off on her solitary ramble.

It was still hot—though the forest trees made a pleasant shade. Olive walked some way, farther and farther—as far as she could make out—into the heart of the forest, but in her inexperience she took no sort of care to notice the way she went, or to make for herself any kind of landmarks. She

just wandered on and on, tempted first by some mysterious little path, and then by another, her mind full of the idea of the discoveries she was perhaps about to make. Now and then a squirrel darted across from one tree to another, disappearing among the branches almost before Olive could be sure she had seen it, or some wild wood birds, less familiar to the little foreigner, would startle her with a shrill, strange note. There were her end there lovely flowers growing among the moss, and more than once she heard the sound of not far off trickling water. It was all strangely beautiful, and she would greatly have enjoyed and admired it had not her mind been so full of the queer fascinating idea of the blue dwarfs.

At last—she had wandered about for some time —Olive began to feel tired.

"I may as well sit down a little," she thought; "I have lots of time to get back. This seems the very heart of the forest. They are just as likely to be seen here as anywhere else."

So Olive ensconced herself in a comfortable corner, her back against the root of a tree, which seemed hollowed out on purpose to serve as an arm-chair. She thought at first she would read a little, but the light was already slightly waning, and the tree shadows made it still fainter. Be-

sides, Olive had plenty to think of—she did not require any amusement. Queer little noises now and then made themselves heard—once or twice it really sounded as if small feet were pattering along, or as if shrill little voices were laughing in the distance; and with each sound Olive's heart beat faster with excitement—not with fear.

"If I sit very still," she thought, "who knows what I may see? Of course, it would be much nicer and prettier if the dwarfs were quite tiny—not like the little man we saw in the street at that place—I forget the name—for he was not pretty at all—but like the dwarfs at the manufactory. But that, I suppose, is impossible, for they would be really like fairies. But they might be something between: not so big as the little man, and yet bigger than the blue dwarfs."

And then Olive grew a little confused in trying to settle in her mind how big, or how small rather, it was possible or impossible for a nation of dwarfs to be. She thought it over till she hardly seemed sure what she was trying to decide. She kept saying to herself, "Any way, they could not but be a good deal bigger than my thumb! What does that mean? Perhaps it means more in German measures than in English, perhaps——"

But what was that that suddenly hit her on the

nose? Olive looked up, a very little inclined to be offended; it is not a pleasant thing to be hit on the nose; could it be Rex come behind her suddenly, and playing her a trick? Just as she was thinking this, a second smart tap on the nose startled her still more, and this time there was no mistake about it; it came from above, and it was a fir-cone! Had it come of itself? Somehow the words, "Roast fir-cones for dinner," kept running in her head, and she took up the fir-cone in her fingers to examine it, but quickly dropped it again for it was as hot as a coal.

"It has a very roasty smell," thought Olive; "where can it have come from?"

And hardly had she asked herself the question, when a sudden noise all round her made her again look up. They were sliding down the branches of the tree in all directions. At first, to her dazzled eyes, they seemed a whole army, but as they touched the ground one by one, and she was able to distinguish them better, she saw that after all there were not so *very* many. One, two, three, she began quickly counting to herself, not aloud, of course—that would not have been polite—one, two, three, up to twelve, then thirteen, fourteen, and so on up to—yes, there were just twenty-four of them.

"Two of each," said Olive to herself; "a double set of the blue dwarfs."

For they were the blue dwarfs, and no mistake! Two of each, as Olive had seen at once. And immediately they settled themselves in twos—two squatted on the ground embracing their knees, two strode across a barrel which they had somehow or other brought with them, two began turning head-over-heels, two knelt down with their heads and queer little grinning faces looking over their shoulders, twos and twos of them in every funny position you could imagine, all arranged on the mossy ground in front of where Olive sat, and all dressed in the same bright blue coats as the toy dwarfs at the china manufactory.

Olive sat still and looked at them. Somehow she did not feel surprised.

"How big are they?" she said to herself. "Bigger than my thumb? Oh yes, a good deal. I should think they are about as tall as my arm would be if it was standing on the ground. I should think they would come up above my knee. I should like to stand up and measure, but perhaps it is better for me not to speak to them till they speak to me."

She had not long to wait. In another moment two little blue figures separated themselves from the crowd, and made their way up to her. But when they were close to her feet they gave a sudden

jump in the air, and came down, not on their feet, but on their heads! And then again some of her aunt's words came back to her, "If they should ask you to stand on your head, for instance."

"Dear me," thought Olive, "how did Auntie know so much about them? But I do hope they won't ask me to stand on *my* head."

Her fears were somewhat relieved when the dwarfs gave another spring and came down this time in a respectable manner on their feet. Then, with a good many bows and flourishes, they began a speech.

"We are afraid," said the first.

"That the fir-cones," said the second.

"Were rather underdone," finished up the first.

Olive really did not know what to say. She was dreadfully afraid that it would seem so very rude of her not even to have *tasted* the cones. But naturally she had not had the slightest idea that they had been intended for her to eat.

"I am very sorry," she said, "Mr. ——, sir! my lord! I beg your pardon. I don't quite know what I should call you."

"With all respect," said the first.

"And considering the circumstances," went on the second.

Then, just as Olive supposed they were going to

tell her their names, they stopped short and looked at her.

"I beg your pardon," she began again, after waiting a minute or two to see if they had nothing else to say; "I don't quite understand."

"Nor do we," they replied promptly, speaking for the first time both together.

"Do you mean you don't know what *my* name is?" said she. "It's Olive, *Olive!* for the dwarfs stood staring as if they had not heard her. "OLIVE!" she repeated for the third time.

"Green?" asked the first.

"No!" said Olive. "Of course not! *Green* is a very common name—at least——"

"But you called us 'blue,' " said the second; and it really was a relief to hear him finish a sentence comfortably by himself, only Olive felt very puzzled by what he said.

"How do you know?" she said. "How could you tell I called you the blue dwarfs?" and then another thought suddenly struck her. How very odd it was that the dwarf spoke such good English! "I thought you were German," she said.

"How very amusing!" said the dwarfs, this time again speaking together.

Olive could not see that it was very amusing, but she was afraid of saying so, for fear it should be rude.

"And about the fir-cones," went on the first dwarf. "It is distressing to think they were so underdone. But we have come, all of us," waving his hand in the direction of the others, "to invite you to supper in our village. There you will find them done to perfection."

"Olive felt more and more uncomfortable.

"You are very kind," she said. "I should like to come very much if it isn't too far; but I am afraid I couldn't eat any supper. Indeed, I'm not hungry." And then a bright thought struck her.

"See here," she went on, drawing the half slice of bread out of her pocket, "I had to put this in my pocket, for I couldn't finish it at our afternoon coffee."

The two dwarfs came close and examined the piece of bread with the greatest attention. They pinched and smelt it, and one of them put out his queer little pointed tongue and licked it.

"Not good!" he said, looking up at Olive and rolling about his eyes in a very queer way.

"I don't know," said Olive; I don't think it can be bad. It is the regular bread of the country. I should have thought you would be accustomed to it, as you live here."

The two dwarfs took no notice of what she said, but suddenly turned round, and standing with

their backs to Olive called out shrilly, "Guten Tag." Immediately all the other dwarfs replied in the same tone and the same words, and to Olive's great surprise they all began to move towards her, but without altering their attitudes—those on the barrel rolled towards her without getting off it; the two who were hugging their knees continued to hug them, while they came on by means of jerking themselves; the turning head-over-heels ones span along like wheels, and so on till the whole assemblage were at her feet. Then she saw unfolded before her, hanging on the branches of the tree, a large mantle, just the shape of her aunt's traveling dust-cloak, which she always spread over Olive in a carriage, only, instead of being drab or fawn-colored, it was, like the dwarfs' jackets, bright blue. And without any one telling her, Olive seemed to know of herself that she was to put it on.

She got up and reached the cloak easily; it seemed to put itself on, and Olive felt very happy and triumphant as she said to herself, "Now I'm really going to have some adventures."

The dwarfs marched—no, one cannot really call it marching, for they had about a dozen different ways of proceeding—they moved on, and Olive in the middle, her blue cloak floating majestically on her shoulders. No one spoke a word. It grew dark-

er and darker among the trees, but Olive did not feel frightened. On they went, until at last she saw twinkling before them a very small but bright blue light. It looked scarcely larger than the lamp of a glow-worm, but it shone out very distinct in the darkness. Immediately they saw it the dwarfs set up a shout, and as it died away, to Olive's surprise, they began to sing. And what do you think they sang? Olive at first could hardly believe her ears as they listened to the thoroughly English song of "Home, Sweet Home." And the queerest thing was that they sang it very prettily, and that it sounded exactly like her annt's voice! And though they were walking close beside her, their voices when they left off singing did not so much seem to stop as to move off—to die away into the distance —which struck Olive as very odd.

They had now arrived at the trunk of a large tree, half way up which hung the little lamp—at least Olive supposed it must be a lamp—from which came the bright blue light.

"Here we are," said one of the dwarfs, she did not see which, "at the entrance to our village." And thereupon all the dwarfs began climbing up the tree, swarming about it like a hive of bees, till they got some way up, when one after another they suddenly disappeared. Olive could see all they did

by the blue light. She was beginning to wonder if she would be left standing there alone, when a shout made her look up, and she saw two dwarfs standing on a branch holding a rope ladder, which they had just thrown down, and making signs to her to mount up by it. It was quite easy; up went Olive, step by step, and when she reached the place where the two dwarfs were standing, she saw how it was that they had all disappeared. The tree trunk was hollow, and there were steps cut in it like a stair, down which the dwarfs signed to her that she was to go. She did not need to be twice told, so eager was she to see what was to come. The stair was rather difficult for her to get down without falling, for the steps were too small, being intended for the dwarfs, but Olive managed pretty well, only slipping now and then. The stair seemed very long, and as she went farther it grew darker, till at last it was quite dark, by which time, fortunately, however, she felt herself again on level ground, and after waiting half a minute a door seemed to open, and she found herself standing outside the tree stair, with the prettiest sight before her eyes that she had ever seen or even imagined.

It was the dwarf village. Rows and rows of tiny houses—none of them more than about twice as

high as Olive herself, for that was quite big enough for a dwarf cottage, each with a sweet little garden in front, like what one sees in English villages, though the houses themselves were like Swiss chalets. It was not dark down here; there was a soft light about as bright as we have it at summer twilight, and besides this, each little house had a twinkling blue light hanging above the front door like a sign post. And at the door of each cottage stood one of the dwarfs, with a little dwarf wife beside him; only, instead of blue, each little woman was dressed in brown, so that they were rather less showy than their husbands. They all began bowing as Olive appeared, and all the little women courtesying, and Olive seemed to understand without being told, that she was to walk up the village street to see all there was to be seen. So on she marched, her blue cloak floating about her, so that sometimes it reached the roofs of the houses on each side at the same time.

Olive felt herself rather clumsy. Her feet, which in general, she was accustomed to consider rather neat, and by no means too large for her age, seemed such great awkward things. If she had put one of them in at the window of a dwarf house, it would have knocked everything out of its place.

"Dear me!" thought Olive, "I had no idea *I* could

seem clumsy! I feel like a great ploughman. I wish I were not so big."

"Yes," said a voice beside her, "it has its disadvantages;" and Olive, looking down to see who spoke—she had to look down for everything—caught sight of one of the two dwarfs with whom she had first spoken. She felt a little ruffled. She did not like this trick of the dwarf hearing what she thought before she said it.

"Everything has its disadvantages," she replied.

"Don't you find yourself very inconveniently small when you are up in *our* world?"

"Exactly so," said the dwarf; but he did not seem the least put out.

"They are certainly very good-tempered," said Olive to herself. Then suddenly a thought struck her.

"Your village is very neat and pretty," she said; "though, perhaps—I don't mean to be rude, not on any account——"

"No,,' interrupted the dwarf; "Auntie told you on no account to be rude."

"Auntie!" repeated Olive, in astonishment; "she is not *your* auntie!"

"On no account," said the dwarf, in the same calm tone, but without seeming to take in that Olive meant to reprove him.

"It's no use trying to make them understand," said Olive to herself.

"Not the least," said the dwarf; at which Olive felt so provoked that she could have stamped her feet with irritation. But as *thinking* crossly seemed in this country to be quite as bad as *speaking* crossly, she had to try to swallow down her vexation as well as she could.

"I was going to say," she went on quietly, "that to my taste the village would be prettier if there was a little variety. Not all the houses just the same, you know. And all of *you* are so like each other, and all your little brown wives too. Are there no *children* dwarfs?"

"Doubtless. Any quantity," was the answer.

"Then where are they all?" said Olive. "Are they all asleep?" She put the last question rather sarcastically, but the sarcasm seemed to be lost on the little man.

"Yes, all asleep," he replied; "all asleep, and dreaming. Children are very fond of dreaming," he went on, looking up at Olive with such a queer expression, and such a queer tone in his voice, too, that Olive got a queer feeling herself, as if he meant more than his words actually said. Could he mean to hint that *she* was dreaming? But a remark from the dwarf distracted her thoughts.

"Supper is ready," he said. "They are all waiting." And turning round, Olive saw before her a cottage a good deal larger than the others; in fact, it was almost high enough for her, with considerable stooping, to get in at the door. And through the windows she saw a long table neatly covered with a bright blue table-cloth, and spread with numbers of tiny plates, and beside each plate a knife and fork and a little blue glass cup. Two great dishes stood on the table, one at each end. Steam was rising from each, and a delicious smell came out through the open windows.

"I did not know I was so hungry," thought Olive; "but I do *hope* it isn't fir-cones."

"Yes," said the dwarf; "they'll be better done this time."

Then he gave a sort of sharp, sudden cry or whistle, and immediately all the dwarfs of the village appeared as if by magic, and began hurrying into the house, but as soon as they were in the middle of the passage they fell back at each side, leaving a clear space in the middle.

"For you," said the first dwarf, bowing politely.

"Do you always have supper here altogether like that?" said Olive. "How funny!"

"Not at all," said the dwarf; "it's a table d'hote. Be so good as to take your place."

Olive bent her head cautiously in preparation for passing through the door, when again the same sharp cry startled her, and lifting her head suddenly she bumped it against the lintel. The pain of the blow was rather severe.

"What did you do that for?" she exclaimed angrily. "Why did you scream out like that? I——" But she said no more. The cry was repeated, and this time it did its work effectually, for Olive awoke. Awoke—was it waking?—to find herself all in the dark, stiff and cold, and her head aching with the bump she had given it against the old tree-trunk, while farther off now she heard the same shrill hoot or cry of some early astir night-bird, which had sounded before in her dreams.

"Oh dear! oh dear!" she sobbed, "what shall I do? Where am I? How can I ever find my way in the dark? I believe it was all a trick of those nasty blue dwarfs. I don't believe I *was* dreaming. They must be spiteful goblins. I wish I had not gone with them to see their village." And so for some minutes, half asleep and half awake, Olive stayed crouching by the tree, which seemed her only protector. But by degrees, as her senses—her common sense particularly—came back to her, she began to realize that it was worse than useless to sit there crying. Dark as it was, she must try to

find her way back to the little inn, where, doubtless, Auntie and the others were in the greatest distress about her, the thought of which nearly made her burst out crying again; and poor Olive stumbled up to her feet as best she could, fortunately not forgetting to feel for her book and parasol which were lying beside her, and slowly and tremblingly made her way on a few steps, hoping that perhaps if she could manage to get out of the shadow of the trees it might not be quite so dark farther on. She was not altogether disappointed. It certainly grew a very little less black, but that it was a very dark night there was no denying. And, indeed, thought it had not been dark, she would have had the greatest difficulty in finding her way out of the wood, into which she had so thoughtlessly penetrated. Terrifying thoughts, too, began to crowd into her mind, though, as I think I have shown you, she was not at all a timid child. But a forest on a dark night, and so far away from everywhere —it was enough to shake her nerves. She hoped and trusted there was no fear of wolves in summertime; but bears!—ah! as to bears there was no telling. Even the hooting cries of the birds which she now and again heard in the distance frightened her, and she felt that a bat flapping against her would send her nearly out of her mind. And after a

while she began to lose heart—it was not quite so dark, but she had not the very least idea where she was going. She kept bumping and knocking herself against the trunks; she was evidently not in a path, but wandering farther and farther among the forest trees. That was about all she could feel sure of, and after two or three more vain efforts Olive fairly gave up, and, sinking down on the ground, again burst into tears.

"If I but had a mariner's compass," she thought, her fancy wandering off to all the stories of lost people she had ever heard of. Then she further reflected that a compass would do her very little good if it was too dark to see it, and still more as she had not the slightest idea whether her road lay north, south. east, or west. "If the stars were out!" was her next idea; but then, I am ashamed to say, Olive's ideas of astronomy were limited. She could have perhaps recognized the Plough and the Pole star, but she could not remember which way they pointed. Besides, she did not feel quite sure that in Thuringen one would see the same stars as in England or Paris; and, after all, as there were none visible, it was no good puzzling about it, only if they *had* been there it would not have seemed so lonely. Suddenly—what was that in the distance? A light, a tiny light, bobbing in

and out of sight among the trees? Could it be a star come out of its way to take pity on her? Much more likely a Will-o'-the-wisp; for she did not stop to reflect that a dry pine forest in summer-time is not one of Will-o'-the-wisp's favorite play-grounds. It was a light, as to that there was no doubt, and it was coming nearer. Whether she was more frightened or glad Olive scarcely knew. Still, almost anything was better than to sit there to be eaten up by bears, or to die of starvation; and she eagerly watched the light now steadily approaching her, till it came near enough for her to see that it was a lantern carried by some person not high above the ground. A boy perhaps; could it be—oh, joyful thought!—could it be Rex? But no; even if they were all looking for her it was not likely that they would let Rex be running about alone to get lost too. Still, it must *be* a boy, and without waiting to think more Olive called out—

"Oh, please come and help me! I'm lost in the wood!" she cried, thinking nothing of German or anything but her sore distress.

The lantern moved about undecidedly for a moment or two, then the light flashed towards her and came still nearer.

"*Ach Gott!*" exclaimed an unfamiliar voice, and Olive, peering forward, thought for half a second

she was again dreaming. He was not, certainly, dressed in blue, and he was a good deal taller than up to her knee; but still he was—there was no doubt about it—he was a dwarf! And another gaze at his queer little figure and bright sparkling eyes told Olive that it was the very same little man who had smiled at Rex and her when he saw them leaning out of the inn window that very afternoon.

She didn't feel frightened; he looked so good-natured and so sorry for her. And somehow Olive's faith in the possible existence of a nation of dwarfs had received a shock; she was much more inclined to take things prosaically but it was very difficult to explain matters. I think the dwarf at the first moment was more inclined to take *her* for something supernatural than she was now to imagine him a brownie or a gnome. For she was a pretty little girl, with a mass of golden fair hair and English blue eyes; and with her hat half fallen off, and her cheeks flushed, she might have sat for a picture of a fairy who had strayed from her home.

Her German seemed all to go out of her head. But she managed to remember the name of the village where they had been that afternoon, and a sudden recollection seemed to come over the dwarf. He poured out a flood of words and exclamations, amidst which all that Olive could understand was

the name of the village and the words "*verirrt*," "*armes Kind*," which she knew meant "lost" and "poor child." Then he went on to tell that he too was on his way from the same village to somewhere; that he came by the woods, because it was shorter, and lifting high his lantern, gave Olive to understand that he could now show her the way.

So off she set under his guidance, and, only fancy! a walk of not more than ten minutes brought them to the little inn! Olive's wanderings and straying had, after all, drawn her very near her friends if she had known it. Poor Auntie and Rex were running about in front of the house in great distress, Uncle and the landlord and the coachman had set off with lanterns, and the landlady was trying to persuade Auntie that there was not *really* anything to be afraid of; neither bears, nor wolves, nor evilly-disposed people about; the little young lady had, doubtless, fallen asleep in the wood with the heat and fatigue of the day; which, as you know, was a very good guess, though the landlady little imagined what queer places and people Olive had been visiting in her sleep.

The dwarf was a well-known person thereabouts, and a very harmless, kindly little man. A present of a couple of marks sent him off to his cottage near by very happy indeed, and when Uncle re-

turned a few minutes later to see if the wanderer had been heard of, you can imagine how thankful he was to find her. It was not so *very* late after all, not above half-past ten o'clock, but a thunder-storm which came on not long after explained the unusual darkness of the cloud-covered sky.

"*What* a good thing you were safe before the storm came on!" said Auntie, with a shudder at the thought of the dangers her darling had escaped. "I will take care never again to carry my jokes too far," she resolved, when Olive had confided to her the real motive of her wanderings in the wood. And Olive, for her part, decided that she would be content with fairies and dwarfs in books and fancy, without trying to find them in reality.

"Though all the same," she said to herself, "I should have liked to taste the roast fir-cones. They did smell so good!" "And, Auntie," she said aloud, "were you singing in the wood on your way home with Uncle and Rex?"

"Yes," said Auntie, "they begged me to sing 'Home, sweet Home.' Why do you ask me?"

Olive explained. "So it was *your* voice I heard when I thought it was the dwarfs," she said, smiling.

And Auntie gave her still another kiss.

THE END

THE MISSING BON-BONS.

A TRUE STORY.

CHAPTER I.

"Let it either be grave or glad
If only it may be true."

DEAR me, such a lot of children! At first you could hardly have believed that they were all brothers and sisters—such a number there seemed, and several so nearly of a size. There were—let me see—two, three, four, actually five girls of varying heights, the two elder, twins apparently, for in all respects they resembled each other so closely; three or four boys, too, from Jack of fourteen to little hop-o'-my-thumb Chris of six. They were all together in the large empty playroom at Landell's Manor, dancing, jumping, shouting, as only a roomful of perfectly healthy children, under the influence of some unusual snd delightful excitement, can dance, and jump, and shout.

"Miss Campbell's coming to-day—joy, joy!" exclaimed one or two of the little girls.

"Miss Campbell is coming, hurrah, hurrah!" sang Jack to the tune irresistibly suggested by the words, and others joining in the chorus, till the next boy created a diversion by starting the rival air of

"Home for the holidays here we be,
Out of the clutches of L.L.D-"

"'Tisn't home for the holidays," objected the smallest girl but one. "Miss Campbell's never going to school no more. Her's coming home for all-a-ways."

But in defiance of her remonstrance, the stirring strains continued, till suddenly through the clamor a tiny shrill voice made itself heard.

"Let Towzer sing, let Towzer sing," it pleaded. "Towzer wants to sing all be-lone."

There was a rush in the three-year-old baby's direction.

"Sing, of course she shall, the darling!" cried Maggie, the "Jack-in-the-middle" of the five little sisters, and the first to reach the small aspirant to vocal honors. "She shall stand on the table," she continued, struggling breathlessly with "Towzer," as she tried to lift her in her arms, "and—"

"Out of the way, Maggie. Out of the way, Flop!" shouted Jack, charging down ruthlessly on to the little girls, sending Maggie to the right-about and

Flop to the left. "You are not to try to lift Towzer, Maggie; mother has said so, ever so many times. You'll be dropping her and smashing her to pieces some day, the way you smashed Lady Rosalinda—you're far too little. There now, Towzer, my pet," as he safely established her on the sturdy wooden table; "sing, and we'll all clap."

Maggie retreated resentfully, muttering as she did so, "I'm not little—I'm seven; and Towzer isn't made of wax."

"Silence!" shouted Jack, and the baby began her song.

"Miss Tammel are coming out of L. D.," she began. Shouts of laughter.

"Go on, darling; that's beautiful. Clap, clap, can't you! She thinks we're laughing at her," said Jack, the latter part of his speech an "aside" to the audience.

But it was too late; Towzer's feeling's were deeply wounded.

"Towzer won't sing no more, naughty Jack, and naughty Patty, and Edith, and naughty all boys and girls to laugh at Towzer," she cried, her blue eyes filling with tears. She was such a pretty little girl, "fair, fair," with not "golden," I should rather say, "silvern hair," so very pale were the soft silky locks that clustered round her little head.

How she ever came to be called "Towzer," her real name being Angela, would have puzzled any one unused to the extraordinary things invented by children's brains, and the queer grotesque charm which the "rule of contrary," especially as applied to nicknames, seems to possess for them.

Towzer's tears flowed piteously; everybody at once was trying to console her, and poor Towzer was all but suffocated among them, when there came a sudden interruption—a maid servant appeared at the door.

"Master Jack and Master Max," she said as soon as she could make herself heard, "your mamma wished me to say as she hoped you were remembering about finishing your lessons early, for Miss Campbell's train is due at Stapleham at five, and your papa's ordered the carriage at four, and will be annoyed if you're not ready. And Miss Patty, I was to say," she was continuing, when suddenly she caught sight of "the baby" still on the table, in a sad state of crush and discomposure, as, Jack and Max having already rushed off, all the remaining children were fighting for her possession. "Now that is too bad, I do declare! What are you all pulling and dragging at the dear child for? Making her cry, too. Miss Maggie, you've been teasing her, I'm certain—you're always

in mischief. I'm sure I don't know whatever nurse will say—Miss Hangela's frock just clean on! I'm sure I hope Miss Campbell will keep you in better order, I do; for since your mamma's been ill, it's just dreadful the way you go on."

"I didn't make her cry," "And I'm sure I didn't," cried Patty and Edith at once.

"Then it's Miss Maggie, as usual; you come too, Miss Florence," said Dawson, as she walked off with the rescued Towzer in her arms and Flop at her heels, taking no notice of Maggie's indignant exclamation—"You're a nasty, horrid, cross thing, Dawson! and I only hope Miss Campbell will set you down when she comes."

Great things were evidently expected of "Miss Campbell," and by no one in the house was her return looked for more eagerly than by her invalid mother, who had of late found the care of her many boys and girls, weigh heavily on her. For this reason Eleanor, the eldest daughter of the family, a girl of seventeen, had been recalled from a school in Paris sooner than would otherwise have been the case, and it was her expected arrival this very evening that had caused all the playroom commotion. It was a year, fully a year, since she had been at home, and it was no wonder that all her brothers and sisters rejoiced at her return, for

she was kind and unselfish, bright and merry, and the old Manor House without her had lost half its sunshine.

Five o'clock—all the children are already at the windows, some at the door, though "she cannot be here till six or half-past," says mamma; and nurse valiantly refuses to put on Towzer's second clean frock for another hour at least.

Six o'clock at last—five minutes, ten minutes, a quarter past—oh, how slowly the time goes! At last wheels, unmistakable wheels up the drive! Jack's head poked ever so far out of the carriage window on one side, and Max's on the other. A general shriek, "They've come! they've come!" and in another minute Eleanor is in her mother's arms, to be released from them only to be hugged and rehugged and hugged again; while from every direction comes the cry, "Miss Campbell has come, dear Miss Campbell." "Miss Tammel are tum, dear Miss Tammel."

. . . . . .

At last they are all in bed—Jack, Max, Harry, Chris, Patty, Edith, Maggie, Flop, and Towzer; and Miss Campbell is free to sit quietly beside her mother's sofa, with her soft thin hands in hers.

"Oh, dear Eleanor, how nice it is to have you home again!"

"Oh, dear mama, how nice it is to be at home again!"

Then they talked together of many things—of Eleanor's school-life and friends, of all that had happened at home while she was away, of all the girl hoped to do to help her mother.

"I shall be so thankful if you do not find the children too much for you," said Mrs. Campbell. "You see, Miss Fanshawe is excellent as a daily governess, but she could not possibly stay here altogether, on account of her invalid father; if only it is not putting too much on you, my darling," she added anxiously.

Eleanor stooped over and kissed her mother.

"Don't fear, dear; I may make mistakes, but I shall learn. They are dear children; how funny it is how my old name for myself has clung to me! I could fancy myself a baby again when I heard that tiny Towzer calling me 'Miss Tammel.' "

"You will never get them to call you anything else," said her mother, "It must sound rather odd to strangers."

"And at school I was always Eleanor. But how glad I am to be 'Miss Tammel' again. I have brought some small presents for the children," she went on; "books for Patty and Edith, and dolls for the three little ones, and a few bon-bons—not many,

but coming from Paris I thought they would expect some. There are two little boxes exactly alike for Flop and Towzer, and a rather larger one for Maggie. So there will be no excuse for squabbling."

"No; that will be very nice. Poor Maggie," said Mrs. Campbell; "I fear you will find her the most troublesome. She is an 'odd' one; perhaps that has something to do with it, but somehow she seems always getting into scrapes, and I fancy the others are a little sharp on her. She has a queer temper, but she is a very clever child."

"She is honest and truthful, however, is she not?" said Eleanor. "I can stand anything if a child is that; but deceitfulness—" Her fair young brow contracted, and a slightly hard expression came over her face.

"I hope so," said her mother; "I have no reason to think otherwise, But she has an extraordinary vivid imagination, and she is curiously impressionable—the sort of child that might be worked upon to imagine what was not true."

"Still truth is truth. There can be no excuse for a falsehood," said Eleanor.

"Mother is too indulgent and gentle in some ways," she thought. "I must look after Maggie, and be firm with her."

"But gentleness encourages truth, where severity might crush it," said her mother softly, as if she had heard Eleanor's unspoken words.

Miss Campbell made no reply, but she pressed her mother's hand.

"And the day after to-morrow, mother dear, you will be leaving us!" she said regretfully.

"Yes, but only for a month; and now that you are here, you father and I can leave with such lightened hearts. I feel sure that the change to St. Abbots will do me good now," replied Mrs. Campbell cheerfully.

CHAPTER II.

To-morrow—the first part of it at least—found the excitement scarcely less great than on the day of Miss Campbell's arrival. For there were the presents to distribute. A delightful business to all concerned, as Eleanor had invariably succeeded in choosing "just what I wanted more than anything," and the hugs she had again to submit to were really alarming, both as to quantity and quality. And among all the children none hugged her more than Maggie.

"It's like Santa Claus morning—goodies too," she exclaimed, dancing about in delight.

"Don't talk nonsense, you silly child," said Patty, who was of a prosaic and literal turn of mind. "You wouldn't believe, Miss Campbell," she went on, turning to her elder sister, "would you, that Maggie last Christmas went and told Flop that Santa Claus was a real old man, and that he really came down the chimney, and poor Flop wakened in the night, quite frightened—screaming—and so mamma said Maggie was never to speak about Santa Claus again, and you *are* doing so, Maggie," she wound up with, virtuously.

"But it's so pretty about Santa Claus, and so funny, isn't it, Miss Campbell?" said Maggie, peering up into Eleanor's face with her bright, restless, gray-green eyes.

"Nothing can be funny or pretty that mamma tells you not to talk about, Maggie," said Miss Campbell.

"Oh, no; I know that, and I didn't mean to speak of it again. But except for that—if Flop hadn't got frightened, it would be nice, wouldn't it? I have such a lot of fairies all my own, and I wanted Flop to have some, and she wouldn't."

"She was very wise; and I think, Maggie, you might find some better things to amuse yourself with than such fancies," said Eleanor rather severely.

Maggie's face fell.

"I'm always naughty," she whispered to herself. "Even Miss Campbell thinks me so already, and I'm sure fairies teach me to be good."

In her vague childish way she had been looking forward to full sympathy from her eldest sister, and her hard tone disconcerted her.

"Now run off, dears, quickly," said Eleanor; "you've got your goodies safe."

Off they trotted, Towzer's little fat hands clasping tight her treasurers.

"Dollies and doodies; Towser and Flop dot just the same," she said with delight to nurse when they reached their own domain.

"And don't you think, dearie, you'd better let nurse keep the goodies for you? See hers, dears," said nurse to the two little girls, "we'll put both boxes up on the high chest of drawers, where they'll be quite safe, and you shall have some every day. Shall we finish Miss Flop's first and then Miss Baby's? It'll keep them fresher, not to have one box opened till the other's done. Miss Maggie, I suppose you'll keep your own?"

"Yes," said Maggie; and so it was arranged.

"I'll keep mine till my birthday, and then I'll have a fairy feast, and invite Flop and Towser," was Maggie's secret determination, which, however, she communicated to no one. And though she spent a great part of her playtime unobserved in arranging and rearranging the pretty bon-bons, not one found its way to her mouth. Her birthday was to be in a fortnight.

The next day Mr. and Mrs. Campbell left home, and Eleanor's reign began; auspiciously enough to all appearance.

"You'll be gentle with them all, dear, especially Maggie; they have not been under regular discipline for some time, you know?" said Mrs. Campbell as she kissed Eleanor.

"Of course, mamma dear; can't you trust me?" was the reply, with the slightest touch of reproach; and to herself the girl whispered, "Real kindness and gentleness are not incompatible with firmness, however."

On the fourth day the calm was interrupted. Eleanor had just returned from a drive to Stapleham, to fetch the afternoon letters, when she was seized upon by Patty and Edith in hot indignation.

"Miss Campbell! Miss Campbell!" they cried. "What do you think that naughty, greedy, mean Maggie has done? She's stolen poor Towzer's goodies—all of them—at least, half—the box was half full, nurse says, and though nurse all but saw her, she will say she didn't take them, and there was no one else in the night nursery this afternoon. Maggie was left alone for half an hour, because she had a little cold, and when nurse and the little ones came in, Tower's box was gone."

Eleanor leant on the hall table for a moment. A sick, faint feeling went through her. Maggie, her own sister, to be capable of such a thing! To her rigorous inexperience it seemed terrible. The idea that taking what was not one's own and then denying it was hardly, at seven years old, to be described by the terms such actions on the part of

an older person would deserve, would have seemed to her weak tampering with evil.

"Oh, Patty," she exclaimed, "are you sure?"

"Come up and see for yourself. Nurse will tell you," said the twins, too eagerly indignant to notice or pity their sister's distress; and Eleanor followed their advice.

The charge seemed sadly well founded. Nurse described the position of the boxes.

"Up on the high chest of drawers, where none of the littler ones than Miss Maggie could climb," she said. Flop's was empty, Towzer's still half full, when they went out that afternoon, and nurse returning unexpectedly, had caught sight of Maggie running out of the night nursery—"where she had no business to be. I had told her to stay in the other room by the fire, and there's nothing of hers in there; for you know miss, she sleeps in Miss Patty's room."

"And what reason did she give for being there?"

"She got very red, miss, and at first wouldn't say anything; but I saw she had been clambering up—a chair was dragged out of its place—and so then she said it was to stretch out of the window to gather some of the ivy leaves to ornament her goodies. And I was that silly I believed her," said nurse, with considerable self-disgust.

"You didn't look at the bon-bons then?"

"Never thought of them, miss, till we came in, and the little ones asked for some, and I reached up and found only the one box, and that empty."

"And you've looked all about? You're sure it hasn't fallen down?

"Oh dear no! Of course I looked everywhere. Besides, I saw Miss Maggie after something in there," said nurse conclusively, "and my parasol that always lies on the drawers was on the floor when I came in."

"Maggie," said Eleanor, "do you hear that? You must have climbed up to the drawers."

"Yes," said Maggie; "I did."

Eleanor breathed more freely.

"What for?"

Maggie hesitated.

"I wanted the parasol to hook the leaves," she said; "I saw it when I stood on the chair."

"Patty," said Eleanor, "go and see if there are any leaves on Maggie's goodies."

Patty returned. No, there were none.

"Well, Maggie?" said Eleanor.

"I know there aren't. I didn't get them. Nurse scolded me, and I didn't like to go back to get them."

"Was she near the window when you saw her, nurse?"

"No, miss; she was nearer to the drawers, and so was the chair."

"Yes," said Maggie, "I was getting the parasol."

Eleanor said no more, but, rather to nurse's annoyance, went herself to the night nursery and thoroughly examined it. There was no trace of the lost bon-bons.

"And supposing she has eaten the bon-bons, where is the box?" she said.

"She may have thrown it in the fire; very likely she didn't mean to keep the box. She may have slipped it into her pocket in a fright," said nurse. But no trace of it was now to be seen in Maggie's pocket.

"Maggie," said Eleanor, "I cannot send you to your room on account of your cold. But no one is to speak to you till you confess all. I shall ask you again at bedtime, and I trust you will then speak the truth. Now Patty, and Edith, and Flop, remember Maggie's not to be spoken to."

"Nasty greedy thing; and not one of her own goodies eaten," muttered Patty. "I'm sure no one will want to speak to her."

"Hush, Patty. Don't cry, Towzer darling," said Eleanor, for poor Towzer was sobbing bitterly, though her grief was inconsistent in its objects.

"No doodies, and poor Maggie!" was her lament.

To divert her "Miss Tammell" carried her off to the drawing-room. And thus Maggie was sent to Coventry.

By bedtime her features were hardly to be recognized, so blurred and swollen with crying was the poor little face. But still there was no confession. "I didn't touch Towzer's goodies," she persisted over and over again. Eleanor's heart ached, but still duty must be done.

"How can she persist so?" she said, turning to nurse.

"Yes indeed, Miss Maggie, how can you?" said nurse. "It would almost make one believe her if there was a chance of it, but I've had every bit of furniture out of the room, or turned about just to make sure. Miss Maggie's a queer child, once she takes a thing into her head; but she's not exactly obstinate either."

So Maggie, "unshriven and unforgiven," was put to bed in her misery, with no kind kiss or loving "good-night." "If she would but own to it, dreadful though it is," sighed Eleanor. But two days—two days, and, worse still, two nights—went by, and still the child held out. Eleanor herself began to feel quite ill, and Maggie grew like a little ghost. Her character seemed to have changed

strangely—she flew into no passions; and called no one any names; apparently she felt no resentment, only misery. But how terribly crushing was the Pariah-like life she led in the nursery, probably none of those about her had the least idea of. On the third morning there came a change.

"Miss Campbell! Miss Campbell!" said Patty and Edith, slipping with bare feet and night-gowned little figures into their sister's room—quite against orders, but it was a great occasion—"wake up, wake up, Maggie's confessed!"

And so it proved. There sat Maggie upright in her cot, with flushed face and excited eyes.

"I took them, Miss Campbell. I did take Towzer's goodies, and eatened them up."

Eleanor sat down on the side of the little bed.

"Oh, Maggie!" she said reproachfully. "How could you! But, still more, how could you deny it so often?"

Maggie looked at her bewilderedly, then meeting the stern reproach in her sister's eyes, hid her face in the bed-clothes while she murmured something about not having remembered before.

"Hush!" said Eleanor, "don't make things worse by false excuses."

"Make her tell all about it," whispered Patty.

"No," said Eleanor; "it would only tempt her

to invent palliations. It is miserable enough—I don't want to hear any more."

What "palliations" were, to Patty was by no means clear.

"At least," she persisted, "you might ask her what she did with the box."

Maggie caught the words.

"I didn't touch the box," she said, "only the goodies."

"Oh, what a story!" exclaimed the twins.

"Be quiet, children; I will not have any more said. Don't you see what it will lead her into," said Eleanor.

But some of her old spirit seemed to have returned to Maggie. Her eyes sparkled with eager. ness as she repeated, "I didn't touch the box; no, I never did. Only the goodies."

"Maggie, you are to say no more, but listen to me," said Eleanor. Then sending Patty and Edith away, she spoke to the culprit as earnestly as she knew how of the sin of which she had been guilty, ending by making her repeat after her a few simple words of prayer for pardon. All this Maggie received submissively, only whispering, as if to herself, "But I do think God might have made me remember before!" which remark Eleanor judged it best to ignore. Then she kissed Maggie, and the

child clung to her affectionately. But still Eleanor could not feel satisfied; there was a dreamy vagueness about the little girl—a want, it seemed to Eleanor, of realizing her fault to the full—which puzzled and perplexed her. Still Maggie was restored to favor, and in a day or two seemed much the same as usual, even flying into a passion when, contrary to Eleanor's order, the subject was alluded to in the nursery and curiosity expressed as to what had become of the box. "I don't mind you saying I took the goodies," she said. "I did; but I never touched the box."

A week, ten days went by. It was the evening before Maggie's birthday. All the children were in bed, Jack and Max at their lessons in their own room, when a tap came at the door of the library where Miss Campbell was sitting alone, and in answer to her "come in," nurse entered. She looked pale and discomposed. Eleanor could almost have fancied she had been crying.

"What is the matter?" she exclaimed.

"This, Miss Campbell, this is the matter," said nurse, laying a little box on the table; "and oh! when I think what that poor child suffered, I feel as if I could never forgive myself."

"Flop's box!" said Eleanor, bewildered; "it can't be—surely it is Towzer's—and," as she opened it, "half full of bon-bons!"

"Yes, miss; just as it was left."

"And Maggie never touched them?"

"Never touched them, miss," said nurse solemnly. Then she explained. A dressmaker from the neighboring town had been in the nursery the day the bon-bons were missed, fitting nurse in the very room where they were. And on this person's return home, she had found the little box among the folds of the material. "I remember tossing a lot of things up on to the drawers to be out of the way, because Miss Baby would climb on to my bed, where they were, and I thought she would crush them," said nurse; "and Miss Weaver never thought it of any consequence, or she would have brought it before. It's a long walk from Stapleham, and she knew she would be coming in a few days with my new dress, so thought it wouldn't matter."

Nurse was so genuinely distressed that Eleanor could not find it in her heart to say anything to add to her trouble. Besides, how could she, of all others, do so?

"I," she reflected, "with mamma's warning in my ears. Ah, yes, I see now what she meant by Maggie's impressionableness and imaginativeness, and the tender treatment she needs.

The next day Eleanor herself told Maggie of the discovery, and showed her the box. For a moment

an expression of extreme perplexity clouded the child's face. Then like a sudden ray of sunshine, light broke over it.

"I know, Miss Campbell!" she exclaimed, "I know how it was. I thinkened and thinkened so much about it that at last I dreamed it. But only about the goodies, not the box. So I didn't tell a story, did I, Miss Campbell? Dreams aren't stories."

"No, darling. And will you forgive me for doubting you?" said Eleanor.

"But how could you help it, Miss Campbell, dear Miss Campbell?" cried Maggie, without a touch of resentment.

So Maggie was cleared, and the new sympathy with her, born of this grievous mistake, never failed her on the part of her eldest sister; and Maggie's temper and odd ways gradually softened down into no worse things than unusual energy and very decided talent. She became undoubtedly the "clever woman of the family," but as her heart expanded with her head, Eleanor had good reason to feel happy pride in her young sister. And when the mother came home, after a month's absence, to find all prospering under Miss Campbell's care, and Eleanor felt free to tell her all that happened —which by letter, for fear of troubling her, she

had refrained from doing—she felt that her one misgiving as to her eldest daughter's influence over the younger ones was removed. The lesson of the missing bon-bons would never be forgotten. Poor Maggie's three days of suffering had not been in vain.

THE SIX POOR LITTLE PRINCESSES,

"And all the Christ Child's other gifts . . .
. . . but still—but still—
The doll seem'd all my waking thoughts to fill. . . ."
The Doll that ne'er was Mine.

THERE were six of them, beginning with Helen and ending with Baby, and as Helen was only twelve and Baby already five, it is easy to understand that they were all pretty near of a size. But they weren't really princesses. That was all Jinny's planning. Indeed most things which were nice or amusing or at all "out-of-the-way" were Jinny's planning.

Jinny's long name was Ginevra. She came third, Helen and Agatha were in front of her, and below her came Elspeth and Belinda and Baby. Baby had a proper name, I suppose, but I never heard it, and so I can't tell you what it was. And as no one ever did hear it, I don't see that it much matters. Nor would it have mattered much if Belinda had had no proper name either, for she was never called anything but Butter-ball. The story was

that it was because she was so fat; and as, like many fat people, she was very good-natured, she did not mind.

They were all together in the nursery, together but alone, as was rather often the case; for they had no kind, comfortable old nurse to spoil and scold them by turns, poor children, only a girl that Miss Burton, the lady whom they lived with, kept "to do the nursery work," which does not sound like being a nice nurse at all, though I suppose Miss Burton did not understand the difference. There were a good many things she did not understand. She liked the children to be neatly dressed, and to have good plain food in plenty; she was very particular that they should do their lessons and go for a walk every day when it was fine enough, but that was about all she thought of. She did not think they needed any fun except what they could make for themselves, and even then it must not be too noisy; she could not understand that they could possibly be "dull," caged up in their nursery. "Dull," when there were six of them to play together! She would have laughed at the idea.

They had few story-books and fewer toys. So they had to invent stories for themselves, and as for the toys, to make believe very much indeed.

But how they would have succeeded in either had it not been for Jinny I should be afraid to say.

"It's a shame—a regular shame," said Ginevra. She was sitting on the table in the middle of the room with Elspeth beside her. The two little ones were cross-legged on the floor, very disconsolately nursing the battered remains of two very hideous old dolls, who in their best days could never have been anything but coarse and common, and Helen and Agatha sat together on a chair with a book in their hands, which, however, they were not reading. "It's a shame," Ginevra repeated; "even the little princes in the tower had toys to play with."

"Had they?" said Helen. "Is that in the history, Jinny?"

"It's in some history; anyway, I'm sure I've heard it," Jinny replied.

"But this isn't a tower," said Agatha.

"No, it's a dungeon," replied Ginevra grimly. "And if any of you besides me had the spirit of a true princess, you wouldn't stand it."

"We don't want to stand it any more than you do," Helen said quietly. "But what are we to do? You don't want to run away, do you? Where could we run no? It isn't as if papa was anywhere in England. Besides, we're not starved or beaten, and we're in no danger of having our heads cut off."

"I'd rather we were—there'd be some fun in that," said Princess Jinny.

"Fun!" repeated Agatha.

"Well, it wouldn't be as stupid as being shut up here in this dreary old nursery—I mean dungeon," said Ginevra. "And now that our cruel gaoler has refused to let us have the small solace of—of a—" she could not find any more imposing word—"*doll* to play with, I think the time has come to take matters into our own hands, princesses."

"I've no objection," said Helen and Agatha, speaking together. "But what do you mean to do?"

"You shouldn't call Miss Burton a gaoler—she isn't as bad as *that;* besides, she's not a man," said Elspeth, who had not before spoken. "We might call her the governor—no, governess; but that sounds so funny, 'governess of the tower,' or custo—then some word like that, of the castle."

"But this isn't a tower—we've fixed that—nor a castle. It's just a dungeon—that'll do very well, and it's great fun at night when we put out the candles and grope about in the dark. And gaoler will do very well for Miss Burton—some are quite kind, much kinder than she."

"It's all along of our never having had any mama," said a slow, soft little voice from the floor.

"Princess Butter-ball, what a vulgar way of speaking you have!—'all along of'—I'm ashamed of you," said Jinny severely. "Besides, we did have a mamma once—all except——" and she glanced at Baby, but without finishing her sentence. For had she done so poor Princess Baby would have burst into loud sobs; it was a very sore point with her that she had never had a mamma at all, whereas all the others, even Butter-ball, were perfectly sure they could remember their mother.

"If Aunt Ginevra would come home," sighed Elspeth. "We've always been promised she would."

"And she's written us kind letters," added Agatha.

"What's letters?" said Jinny contemptuously.

"Well you needn't complain," said Helen. "She sent you a silver mug—real silver—and that's more than any of our godmothers did for the rest of us."

"Yes, she did," said Jinny, "and it's fortunate for us all, princesses, that through all our troubles I have always kept that one—memento of happpier days about my person——"

"What stories, Jinny!" Agatha exclaimed. "At least it's stories if you're being real just now. You mix up princess-ing and real, so that I get quite muddled. But, you know, you *don't* carry the mug about with you."

For all answer, Princess Ginerva, after some fumbling in her pocket, drew out a short, thick parcel wrapped in tissue paper, which she unfolded, and held up to view a silver mug.

"There now," she said.

Agatha looked rather crestfallen.

"It must be very uncomfortable to have that lumpy thing in your pocket, and some day Miss Burton will be asking where it's gone," she said "I suppose it makes you fancy yourself more a princess, but I'm getting rather tired of fancies. Now if we only had a beautiful doll, and could all work at dressing it, that *would* be worth something."

"And we might go on being princesses all the same, or even more," put in Elspeth.

"Patience," said Jinny, "patience and courage. Leave it to me. I think I see my way. I have my eye on a trusty adherent, and if I am not much mistaken, you shall have a doll before Christmas."

All five pricked up their ears at this—they had all at the bottom of their hearts the greatest faith in Ginevra, though the elder ones now and then felt it necessary to snub her a little.

"Are you in earnest, Jinny?" said Helen; "and if you are, I wish you'd tell us what you mean. Who is the trusty adherent?"

"I know," said Agatha. "It's the red-haired boy next door. Jinny dropped her umbrella the other day and he picked it up for her, and she stopped to thank him—that day we had colds and couldn't go out, Helen."

"No," said Elspeth; "it was Jinny that picked up some of his books that dropped—he was carrying such a pile of awfully messy ragged ones. He must go to a messy school."

"He was not going to school," said Ginevra. "He was taking these old books to—but no, I must not betray him."

"Rubbish." said Agatha; "he can't be more than nine. What could there be to betray? *He's* not a shut-up prince, Jinny. Do talk sense for once."

Ginevra changed her tone.

"I don't want to tell you," she said in a matter-of-fact voice, "for fear of disappointing you all. Just wait a very few days and then I'll tell you. But first, *supposing* we could get a doll, what should it be like—fair or dark?"

"Dark, black hair and brown eyes," replied all the five voices. For the six princesses had fair curls and blue eyes, so naturally, they preferred a contrast.

"Hum," said Jinny. "Brown hair perhaps, but

not black. The black-haired dolls in the shop-windows looked common."

"Never mind. *Any* haired would do so long as we got her," said Agatha. "But don't talk about it. It does make me want her *so* dreadfully,"

Late that afternoon, just about the time that the little boy next door would be coming home from school, a small figure with a shawl drawn over its head might have been seen at Miss Burton's front gate. She had waited patiently for some minutes. At last she was rewarded by the sight, or the sound rather, for it was almost too dark to see any one, of Master Red-Head coming up the road. When he got close to his own door she called out. It was rather difficult to do so, for she had no idea what his name was.

"Master—Mr.—" she began, and then changing suddenly, "boy, please, I don't know your name."

He stopped and came up to her, exclaiming of course, "I say, who's there? What's up?"

"It's me—Prin—I mean one of the little girls next door, the one who picked up your old books the other day. I want to ask you something, please."

Red-Head was all attention, and the two went on talking for some minutes.

"You're sure he will?" said Jinny at last.

"Quite positive. I'll get all out of him I can. It's real silver, you say."

"Real, pure silver," she replied.

"And—and it's your very own? I mean you may do what you like with it?" Red-Head went on, for he was a boy with a conscience.

"Of course it's my own. Do you think I'd steal?" exclaimed Jinny indignantly, so indignantly that she omitted to answer his second question, not even asking it of herself.

"No, no, of course not. But you know—*I* wouldn't get leave to sell my watch though it's my own. Only I suppose it's all because you've no father and mother to look after you. It's very hard on you to have no toys. I suppose girls can't live without dolls. But I say, tell me again about the doll. I'll have to do it all at once, for we're going away for the holidays the day after to-morrow."

"You're to get all the money you can, and the very prettiest doll you can have for the money. With brown hair, remember—not light, we're tired of light, we've all got it ourselves—and not black, black's common."

"And not red, I suppose. You may as well say it. I don't mind."

"Well, no," said Ginevra hesitatingly. She would not for worlds have hurt his feelings—no princess

would so treat a trusty adherent—yet she could not pretend to a weakness for red hair. "I *think* we'd like brown best."

"All right. Then to-morrow afternoon, just about this time. It's a half-holiday—we're breaking up, but it's best to wait till dark for fear you should get a scolding. I'll be here just about this time, with—you know what."

"Thank you, oh, thank you so much!" and Ginevra held out her hand, half expecting him to kiss it, instead of which, however, he gave it a schoolboy shake.

"I can excuse it, however; he could not be expected to understand," she said to herself as she flew up to the nursery.

She could scarcely sleep that night and the next morning it was all she could do to keep her secret. But there was plenty of determination under Princess Jinny's fair curls, and by dint of much squeezing of her lips together and saying to herself what a pity it would be to spoil the beautiful "surprise," she managed to get through the morning without doing more than dropping some mysterious hints. But how long the day seemed, short as it really was! Would it never get dark? For it was clear and frosty, and the afternoon, to Jinny, appeared, out of contradiction, to be twice as long as usual of closing in.

"All comes however, to him (or her) who waits," and the blissful moment at last arrived when Ginevra found herself running upstairs, though not so fast as the evening before, for fear of dropping the precious parcel she held in her arms.

"The dear, sweet boy," she said to herself. "I'd have liked to kiss him. Perhaps we all might when he comes home again."

For Red-Head's last words had been a charge not to forget to let him know after the holidays if Miss Dolly was approved of.

Ginevra burst into the nursery.

"Princesses," she exclaimed, "shut your eyes, while I unwrap her. I'll shut mine too. I haven't seen her myself."

"Is it—can it be—the doll?" they all cried, and their hearts nearly stopped beating with excitement.

"Now," Jinny exclaimed.

They all pressed forward. All six pairs of eyes were fixed on Jinny's lap, but not a sound was heard. A blank look of disappointment fell over every face. Red-Head, poor Red-Head, had done his best, but, oh, what a mistake! He had bought a *dressed* doll, and as ten and sixpence, which was all he had got for the mug, will not go very far in such articles, it can be imagined that dolly herself, not-

withstanding the gorgeousness of her attire, fell short, lamentably short: of the poor princesses' expectations.

"She's only china, and her hair's a put on-wig," said Agatha, with tears in her eyes.

"Her clothes don't even take off and on, and they're not a bit like a little girl's clothes," said Elspeth.

Ginevra said not a word; her face told of nothing less than despair.

"And poor darling Jinny has sold her mug to buy it with—all to please us. I found it out, but it was too late to stop it," said Helen. "Jinny darling, we must like her, we *will*—any way she'll be better than nothing. We'll make her new clothes, and then perhaps she won't look so vulgar," whereupon, Helen setting the example, all the five princesses fell upon Jinny's neck and hugged and kissed her and each other amidst their tears.

"And we mustn't tell Red-Head," said Jinny; "he'd be *so* disappointed. He did his best. I never thought of saying she wasn't to be dressed. He's going away to morrow, and of course they wouldn't change the doll after he comes back Besides, she *is* better than nothing, surely?"

Christmas Eve—the six princesses sat on the window-sill looking out on the fast-falling snow.

Dolly—partially denuded of her gorgeous attire, but looking rather woe-begone, if less self-satisfied and vulgar, for new clothes "to take on and off," and of irreproachable good taste, are not to be fashioned by little fingers in a day—was reposing in Butter-ball's fat arms. They "took turns" of her, as was the fairest arrangement under the circumstances of six little girls and only one doll; and, true to the sound philosophy of her being "better than nothing," a certain half-contemptuous affection for her had taken the place of the first dislike.

Suddenly—rat-tat-tat at the front knocker.

"The postman," said Helen. "*Possibly* there may be a Christmas card for us."

"It was for "us," but it was not a card. No; a letter, addressed outside to Helen as the eldest, but inside beginning "My six dear little nieces."

"From Aunt Ginevra, Helen exclaimed; "and oh, she is coming home at last. And oh, oh, just fancy, we are all to go to live with her. And—and——"

"Read it aloud," said Jinny quickly. But Helen was all trembling with excitement. Jinny seized it and read.

Delightful news truly for the six imprisoned princesses!

"She *must* be nice," said Jinny; "she writes so sweetly. And what can the presents be that she says she is sending us for Christmas?"

Agatha looked over her shoulder.

"I have chosen what I think would have pleased me most when I was a little girl. The box is sent off by express from Paris, where your uncle and I are resting for a few days, so that you may have it by Christmas. And before the new year begins, my darlings, I hope to be at last with you."

Rat-tat-tat again. The railway van this time. Such a big box comes up to the nursery. Dear, dear, what a business to get it opened. How the six pairs of eyes shine, how the six pairs of hands tremble with eagerness as each undoes her own specially marked parcel. And oh, the cries of delight at last! What could be lovelier, what more perfect, than the six exquisite dolls, each more beautiful than her sisters!

"Real wax, real hair, real everysing," cries Princess Baby.

"One suit of clothes ready, taking off and on ones, and lots of stuff to make more," adds Butterball.

"Oh, how sweet Auntie must be, how happy we are going to be!" cry all.

But Jinny's face is sad.

"My poor, ugly dolly," she murmurs. "And oh, what shall I say if Auntie asks for my jug?"

"We'll tell her—all of us together. It was all for our sakes you did it, and so she can't be angry," say the other five.

"And, Jinny, I do think the old doll would make a beautiful maid for the others; she really couldn't look vulgar in a neat print frock and white apron."

Ginevra brightens up at this.

"All the same," she said, "I wish now we had waited a little and believed that Auntie would come as soon as she could. I see that it would have been better. And oh, I do so hope she won't be vexed."

She was not vexed; only very, *very* sorry. More deeply sorry than the princesses themselves could understand.

"I had no idea of it all," said poor Auntie.

"Yet I could not have come to you sooner, my darlings. Still—if I had known—— But it is all over now, and you are going to be as happy as ever your Auntie can make you."

"And it's *almost* the same as having a mamma, isn't it?" said Baby, satisfied that in this possession she had an undoubted share.

The mug was reclaimed. And the dealer, who had paid far too little for it, was well frightened by

no less a person than Uncle himself.

Poor Red-Head never knew how he had failed. But Auntie, who got to know his father and mother, was able, without hurting his feelings, to make him understand that little boys do well to keep out of such transactions even when inspired by the kindest of motives.

THE END

GRANDMOTHER DEAR'S OLD WATCH.

A FRAGMENT.

PART I.

"Those never loved
Who dream that they 'loved once.'"—E. B. BROWNING.

"You won't be long any way, dear Auntie?" said Sylvia with a little sigh. "I don't half like your going. Couldn't you wait till the day after to-morrow?"

"Or at least take me with you," said Molly, Sylvia's younger sister, eagerly.

Auntie hesitated—she glanced up at as much of the sky as could be seen through the laced-shrouded window of their pretty Paris *salon*—it was already beginning to grow dusky, for though only half-past three, it was the thirty-first of December, and a dull day—and then turned with decision towards the door.

"No, dears," she said; "I shall go more quickly

alone. Sylvia's cold would be none the better for going out so late, and I would rather you, Molly, stayed with her. So good-bye, darling; I shall not be long."

"I should not like to think of poor Sylvia sitting alone in the gloaming, to-day of all days," said Auntie to herself as she made her way down the three flights of handsome marble stairs which led to their *appartement.* "I can see she is very sad—remembering how different it was this day last year. And dear Molly's good spirits are an inestimable blessing. Ah, my darling, I may do my best, I *will* do my best, but I cannot make up to you for grandmother;" and with the tears in her eyes, and many a tender thought in her heart, Auntie made her way along the street.

The two girls were watching her, though she did not know it. There was a tiny balcony outside the window on to which Molly stepped almost as soon as the door had closed on Auntie.

"Come out here for a moment, Sylvia;" she called to her sister; "we can see her as far as the corner"—for the street was one of the wide handsome avenues in the new part of Paris, and there were few passers-by. "As far as the corner," therefore, it was easy to distinguish Auntie's figure in its deep mourning dress—not *quite* so erect or

active as it used to be, for Auntie was no longer young, and this year, so nearly ended now, had brought her the greatest sorrow of her life—as she quickly made her way.

"Dear Auntie," said Sylvia; "I wish she were back again. I am sure we could have done without money for a day."

"*Two* days it would have been" corrected Molly; "the bank will be closed to-morrow, you know."

"Of course I know that," said Sylvia, a little testily.

"And there are some people coming to be paid, and Auntie never likes to keep any one waiting," continued Molly imperturbably. "If Auntie had only taken me with her——"

"How absurd you are!" said Sylvia. "You speak as if Auntie were a baby, or as if no one could take care of her but you—no dear," she broke off hastily, "I should not speak like that. I don't mean to be cross—but oh, Molly, how we do miss grandmother," and the quickly rising tears in the pretty eyes raised to her sister's face at once subdued any resentment Molly may have felt. She bent her tall figure—for though nearly two years younger, she was taller than her sister—and enveloped Sylvia in a loving hug.

"My darling," she said—the mass of fair hair, which, even at eighteen, she found it no easy matter to keep in order, mingling with Sylvia's soft clustering chestnut locks; "my darling—of course we do—but, Sylvia, we must try to be happy. Think how *she* always said so. And next year—next year may be happier. Papa and Ralph are almost sure to be with us again by this time next year."

"*This* year has certainly only brought us sorrow," said Sylvia mournfully; "I wish Auntie had not gone out. I have a presentiment something will go wrong."

"Don't be fanciful, dear; Auntie will soon be back. Come in and let us get ready a cosy tea for her, and finish the old year as cheerfully as we *can*. And oh, Sylvia—your cold!—and you've been out on the balcony without even a shawl."

No wonder these girls loved their aunt. Since their infancy their grandmother and she had replaced to them the mother they had never known —and the father who was but seldom able to be with them. And now the grief, the inexpressible grief of having lost that dearest of grandmothers had deepened and strengthened the affection of the three for each other. Their life was somewhat lonely at present. Grandmother had died in the south, at the pretty villa which, after so many

years passed in it, had come to seem "home." But she had wished her grandchildren to return to England, their real home; there, before long, to be rejoined by their father and elder brother at present in the East. And they were spending this winter in Paris—"on the way," as it were—for the benefit of Sylvia's drawing and Molly's music; and partly, too, perhaps, because the old home in the south, *without* "grandmother dear," would have seemed too unbearably desolate.

The curtains were drawn, the fire blazed brightly, the lamp on the *console* at the side of the room threw a soft pleasant glow on the dainty table set out temptingly for "afternoon tea," which, notwithstanding their long residence in France, Auntie and her nieces were very fond of. And with the little exertion of making all as bright and pretty as they could, the girls' spirits had come back.

"It *does* look nice," said Molly approvingly, as she stepped back towards the door to judge of the general effect. "How I do wish dear grandmother were here to see how neat and nice it looks. I really do think, Sylvia, that I am getting to be very 'handy,' and to have a good deal of taste in nice little ways—just what grandmother used to wish for me;" and the candor and honesty in her

fair face as she innocently expressed her little bit of self-approval made Sylvia turn away so that Molly should not see the smile of amusement it was impossible altogether to repress. For Molly's open satisfaction with herself when it seemed to her that she deserved a little encouragement, was one of the funniest things about her still.

"Yes, dear, it does look very nice," said Sylvia. "And——Can that be Auntie's ring already?" she broke off. "How very quick she has been."

And almost before she had finished the words the door was thrown hastily open, and Auntie was beside them. But what an Auntie! Pale, looking older by ten years than when she had left them, breathless, her lips for a moment trembling so that she could not speak. The girls' warm words of welcome died away as they gazed at her in terror.

"Auntie, Auntie dearest, what is it; oh, what is it?" they exclaimed, while visions of every possible and impossible misfortune—a telegram with bad news of papa or Ralph taking front place as the worst of all—rushed before their imaginations with the inconceivable rapidity with which such speculations picture themselves at such times of excitement. Auntie struggled for self-control.

"No, no—not bad news," she whispered at last, in answer to some all but inaudible breath which

had perhaps escaped the poor children's lips. "You must—oh, you must forgive me. It was all my own fault. I should not have gone."

"Oh, Auntie, Auntie!" cried Molly, by this time in sobs, "what is it then? Have you been run over?"

"How could Auntie be here if she had been?" said Sylvia, hardly able to help smiling, even in the midst of her fright, at the Molly-like question. "But oh, Auntie, do try to tell us."

Auntie was a little calmer by now. She looked up with a piteous expression in her still white face.

"My dears, my dears," she said, "*you* must not be vexed with me, and yet I feel that you have a right to be so. I have had such a misfortune—I have lost—just now, on my way to or from the bank, I don't know which—I have *lost* dearest mother's—your grandmother's old watch! And with it the locket that was always attached to it, you know—the one with *her* great-grandfather's and his daughter's hair."

"I know," said Molly, "gray hair on one side and bright brown like Sylvia's on the other. Oh, Auntie, Auntie—*poor* Auntie."

And Sylvia flung herself down beside poor Auntie and burst into tears of sympathy. It was sweet to

Aunt Laura, even in the midst of her acute distress, to feel that their first thought was not for the loss itself—much as it could not but touch them—but of sorrow for *her*.

"Grandmother's old watch—grandmother dear's old watch," repeated the two girls, as if they could not believe it. The old watch they remembered all their lives, whose face was almost as familiar to them as that of grandmother herself—the watch and locket which seemed almost a part of her—it was terrible, it was too bad to be true!

"How did it happen? said Sylvia, trying to choke down her tears. "Tell us more, Auntie. Can nothing be done? You don't think it was stolen?"

"No—I feel sure I dropped it. I remember now that it was not securely fastened. That is what vexes me so terribly—to think it was my own fault! Oh, Sylvia—oh, Molly, when I saw it was gone I felt as if I should go out of my mind! It was just as I came out of the bank that I missed it, but it may have dropped some minutes before. I was hesitating as to whether I should have time to walk home, or if I should take a *coupe* so as to get back to you quicker, my dears——"

"And we had made all so cosy for you—such a dear little tea—just look, Auntie;" and herself cast-

ing a glance round at their pretty preparations, Molly's tears flowed afresh.

"I had a presentiment," said Sylvia. "But go on, Auntie."

"And I looked at my watch—I mean, I was going to do so," continued Auntie, "and found it was gone. Of course I ran back to the bank, but it was not there. I rushed up and down the street and asked everybody I saw—I even went into some of the shops—I am afraid I must have seemed quite dazed. Then my only idea was to get back to you, so I called a *coupe* and——" here poor Auntie broke down again.

"And is there nothing to be done?" repeated Sylvia.

"The coachman," said Auntie, "the coachman advised me to go to the 'commissaire de police' nearest to where I lost it. I have the name of the street. So now that I have seen you, I will go there at once," and she rose as she spoke. "Take my bag, Molly dear," she added, handing it to her. "The money is in it."

"It is a good thing *it* wasn't lost too," said Molly, whose spirits were already beginning to reassert themselves. "But, Auntie, you must have some tea before you go. It is *quite* ready."

Auntie, whose hand was already on the door,

was beginning to refuse when Sylvia interrupted. "Yes, Auntie dear, you *must*," she said. "And while you are taking it, it will give me time to get ready."

"You, my child! I will not let you come—with your cold too.

"My cold is very little, Auntie dearest; I must come—I should come," she added pleadingly. "You can't go about by yourself, so upset as you are too. *Grandmother* told me I was to take care of you. Yes, Molly dear, I know you would go, but I am a year and nine months older," continued Sylvia, rising to the dignity of her nineteen years, "It is right I should go."

She gained the day, and so did Molly, to the extent of persuading her aunt to swallow a cup of tea,—what a different tea-taking to that they had been looking forward to!—and in five minutes Auntie and Sylvia were driving along the streets which the former had but so lately passed through.

"Poor Molly," said Auntie.

"She will be getting up her hopes and expecting us to bring back good news," said Sylvia. "Well, we *may* find it, Auntie, They say honest people *sometimes* take things at once to the nearest police-office."

"But this small grain of hope was quickly

crushed. The "commissaire de police" was civil, but not encouraging. The ladies would do better to wait a day or two and then apply to the "Prefecture de Police," in other words, the central office, where waifs and strays of private property, should they chance to fall into honest hands, were pretty sure to be eventually deposited.

"A day or two," repeated Auntie, appalled. "Can I do nothing at once?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "That was as Madame chose. It would do no harm to write at once, describing the lost articles and giving her address. But as for hearing of them at once, that was more than improbable. It was the eve of the New Year—the worst day of all the year on which to have such a misfortune; everybody respectable was busy with their own affairs; and yet there were lots of beggars and such like about the streets. If—even supposing," as if the supposition were of the wildest—"that the watch had fallen into honest hands, a week or ten days would probably pass before Madame would have news of it."

And if it were deposited *here*," said Auntie timidly—"that does sometimes happen, I suppose?"

"If it were deposited here, it would be as if it were not here," said the commissaire sententiously.

"That is to say we should send it on to the Prefecture. I have not even the right to tell you if it is at this moment here or not, though to give you pleasure," he proceeded with unconscious sarcasm, "I will declare to you that it is *not*."

"Then there is no use my returning here again to inquire?"

"Not the least—write to the Prefecture making your statement, and call there four or five days hence—no use going sooner," said the commissaire with a wave of his haud in token of dismissal. So Auntie and Sylvia, with sinking hearts, turned sadly away.

"Little does he understand what four or five days of suspense seem to me," said Auntie.

"To *us* too, dear Auntie," said Sylvia, squeezing Auntie's arm under her cloak as they made their way home through the now dark streets, Auntie preferring to walk now that there was plainly no more to be done that called for haste.

"That is the worst of it—I have made this New Year time still sadder than it need have been for you two, my darlings."

It was hard to go in with no good news for Molly, whose spirits, as Sylvia had forseen, had already risen to the point of feeling sure her aunt and sister would return triumphant, treasure-*re-*

trove in hand! But even now she was not disconcerted. "A week or ten days," she repeated, when she had heard all there was to tell; "ah, that shows, Auntie dear, we need not give up hope for ever so long."

She had need of her good spirits for herself, and the others too, during the days that followed. It would be impossible and wearisome to relate all that Auntie did and tried to do. The letters to "all in authority" in such matters, the visits to the Prefecture de Police, to the company who took charge of printing and posting handbills promising rewards for the restoring to their owners of lost objects, to the famous "Montde Piete," the great central pawnbroker's of Paris, even—— For a week and more Auntie and the two girls, so far as it was possible for them to help her, did little else than exhaust themselves in such efforts, seizing every suggestion held out by sympathizing friends, from the *concierge* to their old friend the white-haired Duchesse de St. Gervais, who related to them a long and interesting but slightly irrelevant story of how a diamond ring of her great-grandmother's had been found by the cook in the heart of a cauliflower just as she was about to boil it for dinner!

"I really think," said Auntie wearedly, as she

threw herself down on the sofa after an expedition to the office of the most widely read Paris daily paper, where she had spent a small fortune in advertisements, "I really think quite half the world is constantly employed in finding, or rather searching for, the things that the other half is as constantly employed in losing. I could fill a three-volumed novel with all I have seen in the last few days—the strange scenes, the real tragedies of feeling—the truly wonderful mechanism of this world of functionaries and offices and regulations. And some of these people have been really so kind and sympathizing—it is astonishing—one would think they would be too sick of it all to have any feeling left."

"I am sure *anybody* would be sorry if they understood that it was dear, *dear* grandmother's watch—and even if they knew nothing, any one would be sorry if they saw your poor dear sweet little unhappy face," said Molly consolingly.

But though her words called forth a rather wintry smile from Auntie and Sylvia, it was with sad hearts they all three went to bed on the night of the ninth day since the loss.

Part II.

Up ever so many pairs of steep winding stairs, somewhat later that same evening, in a small barely furnished little room in one of the busiest and most thickly inhabited parts of Paris, a young woman with a baby on her knees was seated in front of a small fire. It was cold—for, alas, in the dwellings of the poor want of fresh air and ventilation does not mean *warmth*—and now and then she stirred the embers, though carefully, as if anxious to extract what warmth she could without exhausting its source.

"I must keep a little fire together for Bernard," she said to herself. "He is late this evening. Perhaps I had better put the little one to bed—still it is cold for her, for it would not yet be prudent to lay her beside Paul, though he is so much better. What a blessing he is so much better, my poor little boy! One should not complain, even though it is hard to think of what this fortnight's illness has cost, fifty francs at least, and my work in arrears. And to think of that watch lying there useless all this time! Not that I would have Bernard sell it, even if we dared. But still I can understand the temptation were it a thing one *could* sell, to many even poorer than

we. To-morrow, if there is still no advertisement in any of the papers, I really think I will no longer oppose Bernard's taking it to the police, and giving up all hopes of any reward, and even of the satisfaction of knowing its real owner has got it. For they say lost objects sometimes lie at the Prefecture for years, and it does not look as if the person it belongs to was very eager to get it back, otherwise it would have been advertised or placarded. Perhaps it is some one very rich, who has many watches; and yet, that old locket with the date of more than a hundred years ago, so simple too, evidently preserved as a family relic, and the watch too, old, though still so good, as the watchmaker next door assured Bernard, worth quite two or three hundred francs. Perhaps the owner is very distressed about it, but still three or four hundred francs could not possibly be to him or her what they would be to us just now! Why, even *one* hundred would get us nicely round the corner again!"

For Madame Bernard was a sensible little woman with no exaggeration about her. But it is growing colder and still her husband does not return. She must gather the remnants of the fire together, and baby at all costs must go to bed, and if Bernard does not soon come she herself must go too.

She cannot risk catching a bad cold herself just as Paul is recovering from an attack of bronchitis. and she is turning to open a door leading into the one bedroom of their *apartment*, when the well-known sound of a latch-key in the door of the tiny vestibule arrests her.

"Bernard. at last!" she exclaimed with a sigh of relief.

A man, young still, though older than she, entered. He was thin and pale and poorly clad. But his face was intelligent and pleasant, and he had an undoubted air of respectability. And to his wife's accustomed eye, late as it was and tired as he should have been, his face had a flush of excitement on it which half prepared her for news of some kind.

"At last," he repeated. "Yes, I am very late, but I will not grumble as I did this evening when we were told we must work overhours, for it is thanks to the lateness that I have—prepare yourself, my girl—I have found the owner of the watch!"

"The owner of the watch!" repeated his wife. "How? where? But you had not the watch with you? You have not given it back? Not without—" and the little woman hesitated; her husband seemed so pleased, so excited. "If possibly it is a poor person," she reflected, "Bernard is quite capable of giving it back with delight for nothing but a word

of thanks! Yet what would not forty, nay, even fifty francs be to us just now." Still she did not like to say anything to damp his pleasure. But he read her misgiving—he had perhaps a little enjoyed teasing her!

"Calm yourself, my child," he said, though Madame Bernard was certainly much less excited than he; "it is all right. When I said I had found the owner, I meant to say I know *where* to find him, or her. Twenty minutes ago I knew as little as you do at this moment. But coming along the Boulevard, suddenly the light of a gas-lamp flaring up a little fell on a yellow paper on the wall—had it been in the daytime I should never have seen it, it was so badly placed—'fifty francs reward.' I scarcely thought I would stop to read it at first; how many yellow posters have I not read these last few days! But in an instant 'watch' caught my eyes. Here is the description;" and he drew out a shabby pocket-book in which he had copied it word for word. "You see it is our old friend, and no other—'English watch, locket, *souvernir de famille*, etc. Owner to be found at 99 Avenue Malmaison.' So off I go to No. 99 to-morrow morning as early as I possibly can."

"And you will be very careful, Bernard," said his wife. "Give it up to no one but the owner himself."

"And make sure of the reward, eh, my girl?" said he, laughing. "Yes, yes—you may trust me. I know fifty francs will not fall to us badly just now. And if it is a rich person I shall take it with a clear conscience, for I really have worked to find the owner."

And in very much better spirits than they had been since the beginning of little Paul's illness, the poor young couple betook themselves to their night's rest.

One person at No. 99 Avenue Malmaison had not known what a good night's rest was for some time. Poor Auntie! she was beginning to feel that she must make an effort to resign herself, and to throw off the excessive depression which the loss of "grandmother's watch was causing her. It was not fair, she argued, to make Sylvia and Molly suffer for what she and she alone deserved to be blamed for. So she tried to look more cheerful than she felt. I don't think her efforts deceived the two pairs of sympathizing young eyes, but the sisters nevertheless understood and appreciated them, and felt that they too must put on a braver face than came quite easy. So to all outward appearance the trio had recovered their usual bearing. And Sylvia and Molly, as was only natural, went to bed and slept soundly, though never without a last

waking thought of "Poor Auntie! oh, if the watch *could* but be found!" while the watch's owner tossed about in wakeful distress. The more she tried to look bright in the day, the more impossible it seemed to forget her troubles in the temporary oblivion of a sound sleep. It is really wrong of me to fret so about the loss of any *thing*," she would say to herself. "I seem more overwhelmed than even during the first few terrible days after mother's death. Though after all, *were* those first few days terrible? Just at the first when the door seems still as if it were half-open, and we feel almost as if we could see a little way *in*, where our dear ones have gone—no, those first days are *not* the worst."

And somehow, as she said so to herself, there seemed to fall over Auntie a feeling of calm and peacefulness such as she had known little of for long. Then came before her the remembrance of "grandmother dear's" sweet, quiet face as she had seen it the last time, in the beautiful calm of holy death. "It is *wrong* to fret so, my child," the well-known voice seemed to say. And listening to it Auntie fell into a quiet and profound sleep.

It was curious—a sort of coincidence, I suppose, one would call it—that this peaceful sleep came to poor Auntie just at the moment at which Bernard, on his way home, espied by the light of the flaring

gas-lamp the yellow poster with its "fifty francs reward" in big black letters!

When Auntie woke she saw at once by the light that it was much later than her usual time. But she felt so quiet and peaceful and rested—almost as one does on waking from the first real sleep after an illness—that she tried to fancy she was still half-dreaming, and that it could not yet be time to get up. A slight noise—a *very* slight noise it was—at the side of her bed made her at last, though reluctantly, open her eyes again and turn slightly round. Quick ears and watchful eyes were on the alert—

"Oh, Auntie—Auntie dear—you are awake at last. You have had a nice sleep?"

"Very—a very sweet sleep, my darling," said Auntie, smiling, for the last night's impressions were strong upon her. She was not going to make herself unhappy any more about that which could not be cured.

Molly's bewildered eyes turned towards her sister.

"She looks so happy," she whispered. "Can she know, can she have heard us talking?"

No—she had heard nothing—but *something*, some indefinable instinct now seemed suddenly to awaken her suspicions.

"Molly—Sylvia!" she exclaimed, starting up. "What is it? What are you saying? It cannot be——" But before she had time to say more she was interrupted. Yes, it *can* be—it *is*." they called out. And something, a softly shining something, round and smooth, with a smaller shining thing attached to it, dangled above her eyes.

"The watch, Auntie—grandmother dear's own old watch, and the locket! A man—such a nice civil poor man—found them, and has brought them back, while you were still asleep."

"And we could not bear to waken you. You looked so tired and white, and were sleeping so quietly. But it was all right," Molly hastened to assure her. "We lent the money—the fifty francs reward, you know—and he was so pleased, poor man. I am afraid he is *very* poor."

"He asked for a certificate—a little note to say he had been honest in bringing it back," added Sylvia. "But we thought, and so did he, that it would be better for you to write it. So he is going to call again—to-morrow or the day after in the evening—it is such a long way off where he lives, he says."

"What good will the certificate do him?" asked Auntie, stroking and smoothing her dear watch all the time.

"He said it might get him promoted in the office where he works," said Molly, "and he says the watch is a *very* good one—he took it to a friend of his who is a jeweler. So you see, Auntie, though he couldn't have sold it here—you remember they told us it was impossible to sell jewelery that isn't one's own here, as one has to tell all about where one got it and all that—he might have kept it for himself."

"Or sent it away to be sold somewhere else," said Sylvia.

"Oh yes, no doubt he could have done something with it, if he hadn't been really honest."

"And yet so poor," said Auntie thoughtfully. Then she looked again at the watch with such a loving gaze that it brought tears to the girls' eyes.

"Oh, Auntie darling, *how* nice it is to see you looking like yourself again," said Molly. "It seems almost, doesn't it," she added in a lower voice, "as if its coming back were a little message from grandmother?"

How different appeared everything that happy day! How bright the sunshine, even though but some pale wintry beams struggling through the cold gray sky; how nice everything they had to eat seemed—was it, perhaps, that the kind-hearted cook in her sympathy took unusual pains?—how

Auntie smiled, nay, laughed right out, when Molly suddenly checked herself in saying something about what o'clock it was, forgetting that it was no longer a painful subject! How gratefully they all felt to be able to go to bed in peace without the one ever recurring, haunting thought, "If the watch could but be found!"

And with the night came another thought to Auntie.

"Sylvia and Molly," she said the next morning, "I have been thinking so about these poor people —the man who found the watch I mean—and his family," for he had told them he was married and had children. "I do feel so grateful to him. I feel that I must go and see for myself if they are so very poor. You have the exact address?"

"Oh, yes," Molly replied, we wrote it down. But oh, Auntie dear, you *will* let us go with you."

Auntie hesitated a little, but yielded in the end.

"You will promise to let me go in first," she said, "just to see that it is quite respectable, and no infectious illness or anything that could hurt you."

. . . . . .

Bernard hardly knew his little wife again when he got home that evening. The fifty francs had greatly cheered her the night before, but their influence could not explain the state of delight be-

tween tears and laughter in which he found her this time.

"Oh, my friend—oh, Bernard," she exclaimed, "what a happy thing it was for us that you found the watch's owner and took it at once! They have been here; only fancy such distinguished ladies coming themselves so far just to see if they could be of any service to us in return for ours to them. That was how they put it—was it not touching? The old lady"—poor Auntie, I don't think she would *quite* have liked that!—"to whom belongs the watch, so good and kind, oh, so kind; and the younger ones two angels, *angels* simply, I repeat it. Bernard. And when they heard all—I could hide nothing, they questioned me with such sympathy, about Paul's bronchitis and all—they set to work to consider how best they could help us. The lady gave Paul, into his own little hand, another note of fifty francs. That will clear off everything, and make us quite as well off as before his illness; and besides that they have a great deal of work they want me to do, that will be well paid, better paid than what I do for the shops. And they will try to recommend me to some of their friends,—what I have always wished for, to work for ladies direct instead of for the shops. Oh, Bernard, it was a happy day for us when you found that old watch!"

There is no need to say that Auntie and her nieces were as good as their word.

"On the whole," said Molly, with her customary philosophy, "it was almost worth while to go through all the unhappiness for the sake of the delight of the watch back again, especially as it really has been a good thing for those nice poor people. But, Auntie, you will have all your dresses made with watch-pockets now, won't you?"

"Indeed I will," said Auntie with a smile, "and thank you for your good advice Molly. Who would think you had ever been the complacent possessor of six pinless brooches?"

At which Molly and Sylvia both laughed, though Molly blushed a little too.

"I am really careful now, I do think," she said. "You know, dear Auntie," she added in a lower voice, "Sylvia and I, more than ever, *now*, try to do and be all that *she* wished, in little as well as in big things. Dear, dear grandmother!"

THE END.